

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Humane Society hosts successful clinic on Rota. **PAGE 2**
Cop in loose gun case waives right to speedy trial. **PAGE 5**

\$1

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

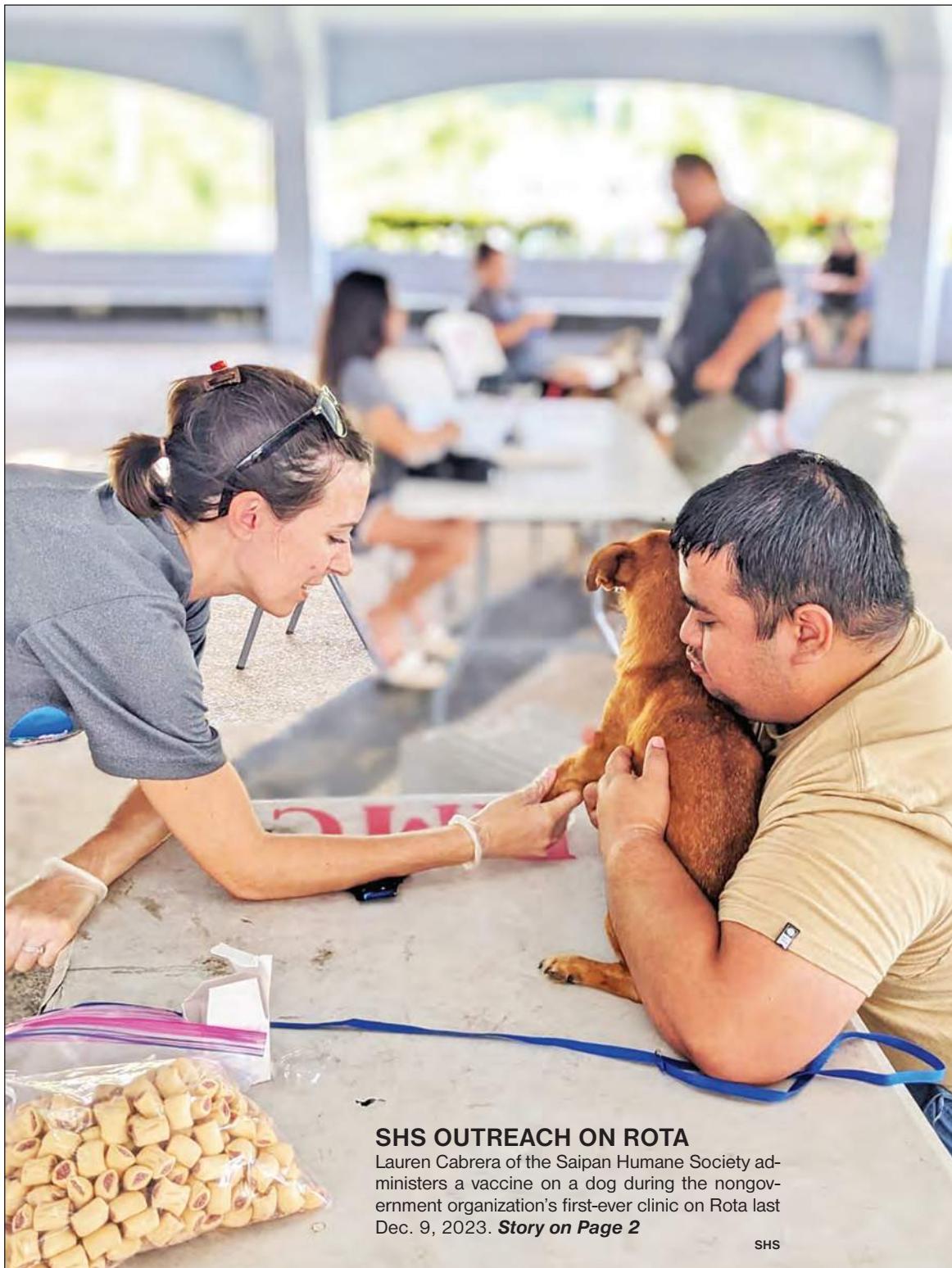
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Deadline looms for IPI to pay \$62M



SHS OUTREACH ON ROTA

Lauren Cabrera of the Saipan Humane Society administers a vaccine on a dog during the nongovernment organization's first-ever clinic on Rota last Dec. 9, 2023. *Story on Page 2*

SHS

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

This coming Saturday is the deadline for Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC to pay some \$62 million in casino license fees it owes the CNMI government, but it remains mum on the subject and there is no telling if the casino investor will be able to meet the deadline of the Commonwealth Casino Commission.

See DEADLINE on Page 4

FOLLOWING IMPRISONMENT OF EX-BMV DIRECTOR DPS: Work to rebuild trust continues



By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

The license fraud scheme that was uncovered at the Department of Public Safety's Bureau of Motor Vehicles has severely damaged

DPS' relationship with the public, but DPS Commissioner Clement Bermudes says the department is working hard to reclaim that trust.

Bermudes said the conspiracy involving former director

See DPS on Page 4

OAG, CNMI gov't face civil lawsuit because of subpoena

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

The Office of the Attorney General and the CNMI government are facing a

civil lawsuit brought by a former governor Ralph DLG Torres' campaign treasurer regarding a subpoena she was served pursuant to her role as treasurer

See OAG on Page 4

LOSE A LIMB OR RISK DEATH?

Growing numbers among Gaza's war-wounded face hard decisions

By WAFAA SHURAFA and
JACK JEFFERY
Associated Press

(AP)—The doctors gave Shaimaa Nabahin an impossible choice: lose your left leg or risk death.

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip



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ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

INSIDE



BUSINESS

Citadel Pacific Ltd., the parent company of IT&E, has announced a strategic realignment.

PAGE 11



WORLD

At least 68 people were killed by an Israeli strike in central Gaza, health officials said.

PAGE 13



LIFE & STYLE

Beyoncé's childhood home caught fire on Christmas morning, but the family living there escaped.

PAGE 15



GOT A NEWS TIP?

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Local

Saipan Humane Society hosts successful clinic on Rota

The Saipan Humane Society, in collaboration with Banfield Foundation and Veterinarians without Borders, celebrated a milestone with their first-ever clinic on Rota last Dec. 9, 2023.

The event marked a significant step toward providing essential pet care services to the community that offered a range of free services, including vaccinations, flea and tick

medication, the 4DX test for heartworm, Ehrlichia, Anaplasma, and Lyme disease, as well as sick consultations.

The turnout exceeded expectations, highlighting the demand for pet healthcare services within the Rota community, according to SHS clinic manager Ruby Ma.

"We were pleasantly surprised by the substantial turnout from the Rota community,

and we are deeply grateful for the community's overwhelming support and enthusiasm toward pet healthcare," she said.

The success of the clinic was made possible by the generous support of the local community. Saipan Humane Society extends its heartfelt appreciation to everyone who contributed to the event's success.

Special acknowledgments

go to Coral Garden Hotel and Ace Car Rental for sponsoring accommodation and rental car services, respectively. Their contributions were instrumental in ensuring a smooth and successful clinic.

The Saipan Humane Society also extends a big thank you to Officer Pedro Manglona, Officer Ricardo Maratita, Officer Alvin Cruz, Administrative Officer Bella Maratita,



Attention CNMI Government Employees, Retirees and Surviving Spouses

Open Enrollment ends soon



Open enrollment runs Wednesday, November 29 - Thursday, December 28

Our goal is to provide you with access to the highest levels of care and support possible through our:

- Strong local presence, in partnership with Pacifica Insurance Underwriters, Inc.
- Comprehensive global resources and access to care
- 24/7 Member Service Support

Attention all members: Please review changes to plan benefits and premium deductions taking effect January 1, 2024. If you're not making any changes to your enrolled plan, you do not need to submit an enrollment form.

Want to enroll, change your plan or update dependents: If you're satisfied with your current plan and coverage, you DO NOT need to submit an enrollment form.

Deliver your form and any required documentation:

- Active employees: to your respective Agency or Department of Human Resources
- Retirees and surviving spouses: to Pacifica located in the Joeten Shopping Center, Insatto St., Susupe

Your health and safety are paramount.

- Visit our website listed below to view your Open Enrollment material and enrollment/change of status form to help you choose the best plan for you and your loved ones
- Open Enrollment support is available by phone and in-person

Websites to help you choose a plan:

- Aetna International: www.AetnaInternational.com/cnmi-ghli
- CNMI Dept of Finance: <https://finance.gov.mp/forms.php>

Have questions? Call us:

- For Open Enrollment inquiries, contact Pacifica locally at: **670-234-6267**
Monday — Friday, 8 AM-5 PM
- For non-OE related inquiries, contact our Member Service Center 24/7 at: **800-231-7729**

Open enrollment runs from November 29 through December 28, 2023.

AetnaInternational.com

1377557-01-02 (11/23)



Soil and Water coordinator Myra Ogo, acting resident department head Filex Calvo, Rep. Julie Ogo, and Officer Jim Atalig for their incredible hospitality and support in co-hosting the clinic

Inspired by the positive response and community spirit, Saipan Humane Society expresses its eagerness to return to another clinic, continuing their commitment to promoting pet health and well-being. (PR)

Rohringer, George are renominated to Health Care Professions Licensing board

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie.delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios has renominated Dr. Martin P. Rohringer and Dr. Glenda S. George to serve as members of the Health Care Professions Licensing board.

If confirmed by the Senate, Rohringer and George will each serve a four-year term expiring on Jan. 19, 2028. Rohringer will represent physicians on the board, while George will represent health care professionals.

Palacios informed Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) last week

that he and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang are confident that both Rohringer and George possess the necessary qualifications and will continue to dedicate their time and efforts to this important board.

Palacios told the two physicians that he and Apatang have complete confidence in their unwavering dedication to serving the best interests of the CNMI's people.

"We are grateful for your willingness to continue serving on this important board, and we are confident that your time and efforts will be invaluable to our community," the governor said.

USCG, Yap strengthen ties through leader engagement, site visit

COLONIA, Yap—In a demonstration of continued cooperation, U.S. Coast Guard personnel completed a key leader engagement and site visit in Yap from Dec. 10 to 12, 2023.

This visit, led by Capt. Nick Simmons, commander of U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam and the Compact of Free Association team, highlighted the enduring partnership and mutual respect between the U.S. Coast Guard and the Yapese community.

Notable events:

- Strengthening U.S. Coast Guard-Yap relations through high-level engagements.
- Recognition of the historical and ongoing cooperation between the U.S. Coast Guard and Yap.

Future support and initiatives:

- Intent to conduct a Safe Boating Workshop in Yap, aligning with initiatives in Pohnpei and Chuuk.
- Participation in Yap Day 2024 celebrations, enhancing community engagement.
- Ongoing U.S. Coast Guard recruiting opportunities at the FSM Fisheries and Maritime Institute and across the FSM.

The CGFM/SG delegation, including Lt. Cmdr. Christine Igisomar and Lt. Anna Maria Vaccaro, held fruitful discussions with Yap's esteemed leaders, including Gov. Charles S. Chieng and Lt. Gov. Francis Itimai. The team also met with Attorney General Joses Gallen, Chief Justice Cyprian Manmaw, Senator Joseph Urusemal, the 11th Yap State Legislature, and the Council of Tamol, underscoring the strong bonds of friendship and cooperation. They also visited the FSM Fisheries and Maritime Institute, spending time with cadets and faculty, the next generation of maritime leaders.

During the visit, Simmons presented Chieng with a U.S. Coast Guard Loran Station Yap patch, symbolizing the shared history and continued collaboration. The historical significance of the U.S. Coast Guard Loran-C Transmitting Station on Gagil-Tomil Island, which was operational from 1965 to 1987, serves as a reminder of the longstanding ties between the U.S. Coast Guard and Yap. Once a crucial navigation aid, this facility symbolizes a shared commitment to maritime safety and navigation.

"The legacy of the U.S. Coast Guard in Yap is a testament to our longstanding commitment to this region," said Simmons. "We are deeply grateful to the Yapese people for welcoming us into their home and island."

We look forward to continued collaboration, fostering maritime safety, security, and regional stewardship."

The visit follows a series of engagements by the U.S. Coast Guard in Yap, including local patrols under Operation Rematau in October 2022 and recruiting events by the USC-GC *Oliver Henry* (WPC 1140) team in November 2022 holding a subject matter exchange with cadets from the FSM Fisheries and Maritime Institute. The USCGC *Frederick Hatch* (WPC 1143) was in Yap on March 1, participating in Yap Day, a celebration of traditional culture, and the delivery of essential supplies. Both ship crews worked with FSM officials to patrol the FSM exclusive economic zone and deter illegal fishing. (USCG)



U.S. COAST GUARD

The U.S. Coast Guard delegation stand for a photo with Gov. Charles S. Chieng, Lt. Gov. Francis Itimai, and Attorney General Joses Gallen in Colonia, Yap, FSM, on Dec. 12, 2023.



Located at the Armatech Building in Chalan Kanoa across the intersection leading to the U.S. Post Office. For reservations or for more information, call 234-894, 287-8895 and 488-8899.

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) RFP24-CHCC/CGC-CORS 988 PROGRAM-004

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: JAN. 5TH, 2024 TIME: 10:00AM (CHST)

OFFICE LEASE

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWNLOAD THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE [WWW.CHCC.HEALTH]. ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS TAB ON THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR. CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

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/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

INVITATION TO BID ITB24-CHCC/WIC-006

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: JANUARY 9, 2024 TIME: 10:00AM (CHST)

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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/s/
Jesse S. Palacios
Corporate Director

Bill seeks to allow DPL use \$1M settlement money for services

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie.delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Rep. Blas Jonathan T. Attao (Ind-Saipan) has introduced a bill that will allow the Department of Public Lands to use \$1 million in settlement money from private companies in order to "enhance" its services.

Attao stated in the House Bill 23-91 that his legislation would amend Section 711 of the CNMI Public Law 23-09 to allow DPL to use the \$1 million allotted under Civil Case 16-004. That money is

» DPL earlier wanted to use funds for homestead infrastructure, but MPLT said no

settlement funds from Kan Pacific Saipan Ltd. and Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC over DPL's lawsuit against Kan Pacific for breach of the land lease agreement.

Under Attao's proposed legislation, an additional \$1 mil-

lion is appropriated to DPL, bringing the department's government appropriation to a total of \$5,960,881.

In addition to the 84 personnel set forth in Schedule A of CNMI Public Law 23-09 allotted to DPL, inclusive of the Saipan-based NOPs assigned to the Department of Lands and Natural Resources' Division of Parks and Recreation pursuant to a memorandum of agreement between DPL and DLNR, DPL shall assume 50% personnel obligations associat-

ed with seven existing and current NOPs with the funds appropriated to DPL.

These seven NOPs shall consist of four NOPs for the Division of Parks and Recreation Rota and three NOPs for the Division of Parks and Recreation Tinian, provided further, these NOPs shall remain assigned to DLNR Division of Parks and Recreation.

In November 2015, DPL issued a request for proposal



Attao

for properties in Marpi to the highest most beneficial bidder including properties still under lease to Kan Pacific.

During the RFP period, DPL had concerns that certain dealings between Kan Pacific and IPI were anticompetitive and detrimental to the outcome of the RFP.

On July 11, 2016, then-DPL Secretary Marianne Concepcion-Teregeyo informed then-Marianas Public Land Trust chair Martin B. Ada that their concerns were brought to the Superior Court and resulted in a settlement of \$1 million from Kan Pacific and IPI for antitrust actions on May 9, 2016.

Concepcion-Teregeyo told Ada that DPL's position on the nature of the settlement funds is that it was not derived from the management or disposition of public lands and using these

funds for infrastructure would be a real benefit to DPL's beneficiaries as it will allow them to build homes.

Concepcion-Teregeyo said they intend on requesting the Legislature to appropriate the \$1 million to fund the infrastructure needs of homestead subdivisions.

She underscored the need for concurrence from MPLT on DPL's position to avoid expending resources to obtain a definite answer from the court and potential liabilities.

On July 27, 2016, Ada declined Concepcion-Teregeyo's request. He urged her to comply with the constitutional mandate as well as Public Law 15-2 and remit the \$1 million to MPLT without further delay.

Ada said MPLT does not agree that the funds, whether they be from a settlement or a judgment, constitute CNMI revenues subject to legislative appropriation.

fore the Superior Court, the complaint noted.

On Oct. 31, 2023, the clerk issued a subpoena *duces tecum* pursuant to the OAG's application and Taimanao was served that same day.

The subpoena requested written record of all contributions and expenses made to and by the Torres-Sablan campaign committee; written record of all contributions from contributors and supporters, and all campaign expenses paid; the names and identities of all contributors and supporters who contributed \$100 or more in cash or fair market value of property; a record of any and all contributions of less than \$100 from a contributor or supporter; any and all records of the communications required for reasonable diligence of a candidate; and any and all communications of any expenses of contract, authorizations, or requests.

Taimanao served as treasurer for the Torres-Sablan committee in the 2022 election.

Taimanao, through her lawyer, is asking the Superior Court to stop the OAG from enforcing the subpoena against her.

As relief, Taimanao wants the Superior court to declare the subpoena null and void and has no legal force and effect.

According to the complaint, after the 2022 election that concluded in November 2022, Taimanao submitted her report on the campaign's statement of account to the Office of the Public Auditor.

Soon after, the commissioner of the Department of Public Safety, the public auditor, and the attorney general executed a memorandum of agreement establishing the Joint White-Collar Crime, Government Corruption and Financial Crimes task force.

In addition, Chambers argues that the Joint White-Collar Crime, Government Corruption and Financial Crimes task force is invalid as there is no legislative authority authorizing the task force.

Chambers also argues that the subpoena issued to his client is invalid because the application for the subpoena was not connected to any civil or criminal case pending before a court.

GROWING

From page 1

The 22-year-old had been hospitalized in Gaza for around a week, after her ankle was partially severed in an Israeli airstrike, when doctors told her she was suffering from blood poisoning. Nabahin chose to maximize her chances of survival, and agreed to have her leg amputated 15 centimeters (6 inches) below the knee.

The decision upended life for the ambitious university student, as it has for untold others among the more than 54,500 war-wounded who faced similar gut-wrenching choices.

"My whole life has changed," said Nabahin, speaking from her bed at the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the central town of Deir al-Balah. "If I want to

take a step or go anywhere, I need help."

The World Health Organization and the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza say amputations have become commonplace during the Israel-Hamas war, now in its 12th week, but could not offer precise figures. At the hospital in Deir al-Balah, dozens of recent amputees are in various stages of treatment and recovery.

Experts believe that in some cases, limbs could have been saved with proper treatment. But after weeks of Israel's blistering air and ground offensive, only nine out of Gaza's 36 hospitals are still operational. They are greatly overcrowded, offer limited treatment and lack basic equipment to perform surgeries. Many wounded are unable to reach the remaining hospitals, pinned down by Israeli bombardment and

ground combat.

Sean Casey, a WHO official who recently visited several hospitals in Gaza, said the acute lack of vascular surgeons—the first responders to trauma injuries and best positioned to save limbs—is increasing the likelihood of amputations.

But also in many cases, he said, the severe nature of the injuries means some limbs are not salvageable, and need to be removed as soon as possible.

"People may die of the infections that they have because their limbs are infected," Casey told a news conference last week. "We saw patients who were septic."

Israel declared war after Hamas militants stormed across the border on Oct. 7, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking more than 240 hostages. Israel has vowed to keep up the

fight until Hamas is destroyed and removed from power in Gaza and all the hostages are freed. More than 20,600 Palestinians have been killed in the fighting, about 70% of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants among the dead.

Before the war, Gaza's health system was overwhelmed after years of conflict and a border blockade enforced by Israel and Egypt in response to the 2007 Hamas takeover of the territory. In 2018 and 2019, thousands were wounded by Israeli army fire in weekly Hamas-led anti-blockade protests, and more than 120 of the wounded had limbs amputated.

Even then, Gaza amputees had a hard time getting prostheses that would help them return to an active life.

mine who are or are not supposed to have driver's licenses. With DPS chief Paul T. Ogunmoro now serving as acting BMV director, Bermudes said there will no longer be any exemptions to this.

"I have placed an acting director there since the former director left the department. One of the things he has instituted is systems to ensure that everyone obtaining a license is properly documented. There is no longer an exemption to that. That's one way we have addressed some of those concerns: ensuring we get proper documentation and I'm very confident with Chief Paul Ogunmoro as the acting director at BMV," he said.

Bermudes said there is a large population of foreign workers who hold CW-1 vi-

sas who obtain licenses. Previously, they needed only to show a CW-1 receipt to obtain a license. However, with new systems in place, DPS will be verifying the validity of these receipts to ensure these individuals really do have pending CW-1 visa applications. Even then, CW-1 visa holders will only be issued temporary CNMI-only licenses that will be valid for just one year.

"We have CW-1 workers who have pending applications with USCIS and they may have families here and may be the only driver in a family. That was our concern. We have allowed and authorized those who have pending validated cases [to] be issued a temporary, CNMI-only driver's license which will be valid for up to one year," he said.

had determined that the reasonable deadline for IPI to pay the 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023 casino license fees for the past four years—from 2020 to 2023—which is due this Saturday, Dec. 30.

The casino license fee for each year is \$15,502,570, for a total of \$62,010,280 for the four-year period.

Demapan stated in the 30-day notice that in determining

what's deemed a "reasonable time," the commission considered the CNMI Supreme Court's ruling in CCC's lawsuit against IPI.

The CCC board will also discuss during tomorrow's meeting r IPI's removal/dismantling of three cranes at IPI's casino/resort project site in western Garapan.

DPS

From page 1

Juana Leon Guerrero and other BMV staff caused the public to lose trust in the department, but the department continues to work on building that trust back up.

"We are rebuilding the trust with our community," he said.

Earlier this month, U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramon V. Manglona sentenced Leon Guerrero to five years imprisonment for her involvement in a scheme to provide undocumented individuals CNMI licenses—for a fee.

Bermudes said the root of this scheme was not properly cross-referencing people's immigration statuses to deter-

DEADLINE

From page 1

IPI director/manager Howyo Chi said yesterday there's no update yet about making any payments. He did not elaborate.

The CCC will have its monthly meeting at the

Springs Plaza in Gualo Rai this Thursday. Included in the agenda is IPI's outstanding casino license fees for the past four years—from 2020 to 2023—which is due this Saturday, Dec. 30.

CCC board vice chair Rafael S. Demapan issued the 30-day notice of payment to IP's Chi last Nov. 30. The CCC board



COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS

PO Box 500830, Saipan MP 96950
Tel. No. (670) 234-3751/52/52 • Website: www.dpl.gov.mp • Facebook: facebook.com/DPLCNMI



NOTICE OF PROPOSED LEASE OF PUBLIC LAND

In accordance with Section 106 (b) of Public Law 15-2, the Department of Public Lands hereby gives notice of its intent to lease certain public land in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Any interested parties of the general public may submit comments, data, views, or arguments of alternative proposals for the lease of the public land. As further provided by Public Law 15-2, the following pertinent information is required to be published.

- i. The proposed lease of public land is described as Lot 013 E 03, containing an area of approximately 10,630 square meters, situated in Lower Base, Saipan. A map showing the location of the parcel is available at the Department of Public Lands for inspection.
- ii. The prospective Lessee is The Pacific Line Corporation. The list of officers for The Pacific Line Corporation: Lee, Cun Ki, as President/ Treasurer and Eric Cruz, as Vice President and Jooyoon Delos Reyes, as Secretary.
- iii. The proposed lease is compliant with DPL regulations and was negotiated by the officers and directors of The Pacific Line Corporation, mainly by Eric Cruz and Jooyoon Delos Reyes.
- iv. The lessee shall use the premises solely for the purpose of a recycling center.

The term of the proposed lease agreement is 25 years.

The proposed annual rental during the term of the lease agreement is based on a percentage of the appraised fair market value of the property plus the applicable percentage of Business Gross Receipts in DPL's regulation.

- v. A copy of the proposed lease agreement may be obtained at the office of the Department of Public Lands, located on the 2nd floor of the Joeten Dandan Commercial Building in Dandan, Saipan; 1st floor of the De'Ana Commercial Building, Songsong Village, Rota; or the 1st floor of the PM Building, Tinian. A copy will also be available online at www.dpl.gov.mp
- vi. The Department of Public Lands has received no alternative proposals to lease the subject public land in Lower Base, Saipan.
- vii. The Secretary of the Department of Public Lands shall accept written comments, views, arguments or alternative proposals from interested parties on or before January 1, 2024, at the Department of Public Lands offices located in Saipan, Rota or Tinian.

NUTISIA PUT I MAPROPONI NA ATKILON TĀNU' PUPBLIKU

Signu gi Seksiona 106 (b) gi Lain Pupbliku 15-2, i Dipāttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku mannān'i nutisia guini put i intension-ñiha para u ma'atkila metton na tanu' pupbliku giya Saipan, Commonwealth gi Sangkattan na Islas Mariānas. Maseha háyi na pattidá intirisa gi halum hinirāt pupbliku siña muna'hálu upiñon, infomasion, pat testimoniu kinontra gi tinhagquin prinoponi siha para i atkilon nu i tanu' pupbliku. Kumu mapribeni más mo'na ginin i Lain Pupbliku 15-2, i tinatittiy pettanesi na infomasion manisisita para u mapupblika.

- i. I maproponi na atkilon tanu' pupbliku madiskribi kumu Lot 013 E 03, ni kunsissisti kási 10,630 square meters, ni gaigi gi hálum Lower Base, Saipan. I mápa ni a'annuk i pāttin i lugát managuaha gi ufisian Dipāttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku para inspeksión.
- ii. I prospective lessee sa I Pacific Line Corporation. I listan nu ufisiat siha para I Pacific Line Corporation: si Lee, Cun Ki, komu Presidenti/Tresureru yan si Eric Cruz, komu Sigundu Presidenti yan si Jooyoon Delos Reyes, komu Sekritáriu.
- iii. I maproponi na atkilon ha tattiy i regulasian DPL siha yan ginen manegosiu ni ufisiat yan direktot-ñiha I Pacific Line Corporation, mayotmenti ginen as Eric Cruz yan si Jooyoon Delos Reyes.
- iv. I lessee debi na u usa i lugát put atyu ha' na rason nu i recycling center.

I temu nu i maproponi na kuntrátan atkilon sa' bentisingku (25) áñus na tiempu.

I maproponi na atkilon gi kada' sákkan gi durántin teman kontrátan i' atkilon mapega gi put sientus nu i bálin "appraised fair market" i propiedát yan i aplikáo na put sientus nu i "Business Gross Receipts" gi halum i regulasian DPL.

- v. I kopian nu i maproponi na kuntrátan atkilon siña machull' gi ufisian i Dipāttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku ni gaigi gi sigundu (2nd) na bibiendan i Joeten Dandan Commercial Building ya Dandan, Saipan, primet (1st) na bibiendan i De'Ana Commercial Building, iya Songsong Village, Luta; pat i primet (1st) na bibiendan PM Building, giya Tinian. I kopia debi iokku' na managuaha online gi www.dpl.gov.mp
- vi. I Dipāttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku tåya marisibi ni háfa na tinhagquin infresi siha ni para u ma'atkila i suhetu na tanu' pupbliku gi Lower Base, Saipan.
- vii. I Sekritáriu Dipāttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku debi na u aksepta tinig' upiñon, infomasion, testimoniu kinontra pat tinhagquin prinoponi siha ginin i manintirisa na pattida siha gi pat ántis di Ineru 1, 2024, gi ufisian Dipāttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku siha ni gaigi giya Saipan, Luta pat Tinian.

ARONGORONGOL PPWOMMWOL ATKILÓONOL FALÚW

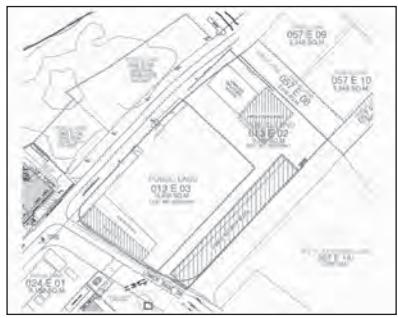
Sángi Tálii 106 (b) reel Alléghúl Toulap 15-2, Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap re isiisiwong arongorong igha re mágemangil rebwe atkkilaay faluweer toulap IIol Seipé, Commonwealth Téel Faluweer kka Efáng IIol Marianas. Schóo kka re tipáli sángi toulap emmwel rebwe isisiilong ischil kkapas, data, views, ngare angüngiil ppwommwol ikka aa siwei ngáli ppwommwol atkkilóonol faluweer toulap. Re bwal ayoora sángi Alléghúl Toulap 15-2, arongorong ikka e ffil ebwe akkateéwow e amwirrimwiritu:

- i. Ppwommwol atkkilóonol faluweer toulap e bwáá bwe Lot 013 E 03, e lo 10,630 reel square meters, iye e lo Lower Base, Seipé. E bwáá wól móópá faluweer eyoor me Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap reel ubwe amwuri.
- ii. Ppwommwol schóo atkkilóon nge Pacific Line Corporation. Listal officers ngáli Pacific Line Corporation: Lee, Cun Ki, bwe president/Treasurer me Eric Cruz, bwe Vice President me Jooyoon Delos Reyes, bwe Sekkretóriya.
- iii. Ppwommwol atkkilóon and angüngú fengál me mwóghutughutúl DPL me e abwungubwung sángi officers me director-il Pacific Line Corporation, spesialment Eric Cruz me Jooyoon Delos Reyes.
- iv. Rebwe yááli ppwommwol atkkilóon ngáli leliyál recycling.

Ppwommwol abwungunwungúl atkkilóon nge ruweigh me limoow ráágh.

Ppwommwol atkkilóon ghal ráágh atol abwungubwungúl atkkilóon yeel nge e lo reel percentage-il appraised fair market value reel faluweer fengál me application percentage reel Gross Receipts IIol mwóghutughutúl DPL.

- v. Pappidil ppwommwol abwungubwungúl nge emmwel ubwe bweibwogh me reel Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap, iye e lo 2nd floor me Joeten Dandan Commercial Building me Dandan, Seipé; 1st floor reel De'Ana Commercial Building, Apilómwol Songsong, Luta; ngare 1st floor me PM Building, Tchilyó. Ebwal yoor pappid emmwel ubwe amwuri online me www.dpl.gov.mp
- vi. Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap rese bweibwogh siiwelíl ppwommwol reel atkkilóonol faluweer toulap iye e lo Alal Ghaloowa, Seipé.
- vii. Sekkretóriya Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap re bweibwogh ischil kkapas, views, angüngi ngare siiwelíl ppwommwol sángi schóo kka re mwuschel wól ngare mmwalí Enero 1, 2024, me Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap iye e lo Seipé, Luta ngare Tchilyó.



Hot pepper eating contest at Tinian Pika Festival

Some like it hot, and the 20th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival is welcoming those who do to its hot pepper eating contest on Feb. 16-17, 2024, in the Marianas.

Challengers of the Hot Pepper Eating Contest will be challenged to chomp 100 pieces of the diminutive but famously potent "donne sali" hot pepper. Both male and female divisions will take to the stage on Saturday. Registration can be made in-person at the festival.

The festival, affectionately known as "Pika Fest" among



The 20th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival will be held on Feb. 16-17, 2024.

locals ("pika" means spicy), pays homage to Tinian's small but famous "donne sali." Other contests scheduled for the

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION



P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514

Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp • Website: <http://www.nmhcgov.net>

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) Board of Directors, through its Chairperson of the Board, is hereby giving notice that a Regular Board Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 28, 2023, at 9:00 a.m. at the NMHC Conference Room, Saipan. The public is welcome to submit written or oral comments regarding the agenda below. Individuals interested in attending the meeting and needing special accommodations are requested to contact NMHC in advance.

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS

- a. Call to Order
- b. Roll Call
- c. Adoption of Agenda
- d. Adoption of Minutes: September 22, 2023 Meeting Minutes

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

III. CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- a. Admin/Procurement & Accounting (NMHC/CDBG-DR)
- b. Mortgage Credit
- c. Program and Housing
- d. Asset Management
- e. FY2021 & FY2022 Audit for NMHC & CDBG-DR
- f. CDBG-DR

IV. DEPUTY CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- a. CDBG
- b. Homeowner Assistance Fund
- c. NMHC Divisions Revenue Generation -vs- Expense for FY2022 and FY2023

V. OLD BUSINESS

- a. NMHC Employee Handbook
- b. Division SOPs
- c. Travel Reports from January 2023 to November 2023 Certification of Completion
- d. Tier 1 Environmental Report from DR Safety Consultant, LLC

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Board Resolution Authorizing the Vice-Chairman to Sign the General Depository Agreement
- b. Return and Reallocation of Credits for Palm Breeze Homes, LLC
- c. Return and Reallocation of Credits for Lotus Homes, LLC
- d. Return and Reallocation of Credits for Ladera Homes, LLC
- e. Selection of LIHTC Applicants for 2023 Credits

VII. LEGAL COUNSEL'S PENDING/ONGOING REPORT

VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

- a. Personnel

IX. OTHER MATTERS

X. ADJOURNMENT

(Notes: Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 13 (a)(7) and Section 13(c), the Board may vote to meet in executive session.)

/s/
Merced (Marcie) M. Tomokane
Chairperson of the Board

President's Day weekend event are the JC Café Hot Burger Eating Contest, the Estafao Pika (spicy chicken stew) Cooking Contest, and Cha-cha Dance Contest, where contestants are encouraged to wear hot pepper-themed attire.

The event is organized by the Marianas Visitors Authority in cooperation with the Office of the Mayor of Tinian and Aguiguan.

"Every year, we turn up the heat a little bit more at the Tinian Hot Pepper Festival, and 2024 is no exception," said MVA Community Projects Manager Martin Duenas. "We invite everyone to Tinian and enjoy the competitions, food sales, live entertainment, arts and crafts, and more."

The festival will kick off on the evening of Feb. 16 and will continue on Feb. 17. The event will be held at the Fiesta Grounds in San Jose, Tinian, adjacent to the picturesque Jones Beach and House of Taga, a U.S. National Historic Landmark featuring limestone monoliths carved by ancient Chamorros.

"This year's festival promises to be even more special, as we commemorate two decades of Tinian's spicy pika goodness," said Mayor of Tinian and Aguiguan Edwin Aldan. "It will be a time for us to reflect on our heritage, appreciate the talents of our local farmers and chefs, and enjoy the wonderful, fiery dishes that make our island unique. In addition to the mouthwatering selection of hot pepper-infused delicacies, the festival will feature cultural performances, live music, and various activities for all ages. We invite both locals and visitors to join us in celebrating our shared appreciation of Tinian's locally grown hot peppers and the diversity of our island's heritage."

Hotel accommodations are available at Tinian Ocean View, Tinian Diamond Hotel and Casino, Tinian Diamond Suites, Tinian Western Lodge Hotel, Lorilynn's Hotel, Tinian Street Motel, Fleming Hotel, Green Lion House Hotel, Lucky Homes Hotel, and the Marpo Valley Inn. Free camping is available at Jones Beach, Taga Beach (toilets, barbecue pits, and outdoor showers available) and at the adjacent Tachogna Beach (barbecue pits, outdoor showers, and toilets are available).

For more information, contact MVA Community Projects specialist Ray Villagomez at rvillagomez@mymarianas.com, Tinian Field Operations supervisor Vida Borja at vbjra@mymarianas.com or 433-9365 or the Tinian Mayor's Office at 433-1802. (PR)

GCC culinary student is first Guamanian to attend Le Cordon Bleu

It started as her side business, baking cakes out of her home kitchen. Now Selah Chong finds herself in the world-renowned Le Cordon Bleu in Paris, France, pursuing her passion in patisserie. After taking culinary classes in high school, Chong enrolled in the Guam Community College Culinary Arts & Food Service Management and graduated with a double major in Culinary and Food Service Management.

Recently, the Le Cordon Bleu Paris Facebook page shared photos of Chong standing with a Guam flag with a caption sharing their praise of having a student from Guam in their presence. She is the first Guamanian to attend the school.

"Le Cordon Bleu is further extending this cultural and international dimension by highlighting the colours of the island of Guam with Selah, a student in the Diplôme de Pâtisserie. Selah is the first student from Guam, and at the age of 23 she has made her dream come true and followed her passion by enrolling at Le Cordon Bleu Paris," the social media post read.

Chong shared that her time in the GCC kitchen classroom prepared her for the setting that some of her fellows at the prestigious school are still trying to get used to.

"When I started classes, it felt very different from GCC," said Chong. "The chefs were cold and seemed only to base you off your final products. The school system itself was easy for me to manage since I had a good amount of experience in the kitchen from GCC. I was definitely prepared and

wasn't overwhelmed like some of my classmates who have never attended a culinary school beforehand."

The GCC Culinary program kickstarted a passion that she had. She started off as a home baker selling cakes on Instagram, while wondering how she could take that passion to the next level. It was through the dedication of her instructors and the staff at GCC that she was able to secure further information on the culinary program.

"I spoke with Mrs. Marivic "Vicky" Schrage [about the culinary program] and she replied instantly with excitement," Chong added. "As I kept going through the program, I felt a sense of respect toward this craft and felt even more passionate about learning. After my first semester, I was easily convinced by Culinary & Food Service Management Department chair Chef Kennylyn Miranda to pursue a second degree in Food Service Management. I was able to finish in exactly two years going over the full student credits and graduated with honors."

Chong highly recommends the Culinary and Food Service Management programs to anyone with a passion for being in the kitchen. Prior to attending GCC she planned to attend Le Cordon Bleu in Paris. Chong chose to earn her Associates in Arts with GCC first, which led to questions as to why she just didn't go straight to Paris.

"I am glad I went to GCC first; it led me to network with the chefs in the island and I also made some lifelong friends that I am still in touch with. I really enjoyed all the

instructors at GCC because they were invested in my life. It felt like they cared."

Chong still updates the Culinary & Food Service Management faculty at GCC with her goings on in Paris.

Chong is currently in Guam to spend time with family and friends during her Christmas break. She will return to Paris where she anticipates graduating in February 2025 with a Patisserie and Boulangerie Diploma. She also plans to earn a

Bachelor in Career & Technical Education so she may pass on her passion and knowledge through educating future chefs.

"We love hearing these life updates from our students after they graduate," said GCC president Dr. Mary Okada. "As with all our successful alumni through the decades, the GCC community is proud of Selah and wish her the best in Paris and in life. Of course, it's fitting for a GCC student chef



Chong

graduate to be the first student from Guam attend Le Cordon Bleu Paris. *Biba Guam!*"

ManageFirst Professional

Chong is also the first GCC graduate to receive the esteemed National Restaurant Association ManageFirst Professional credential since its implementation in 2018. To earn the MFP, candidates must successfully pass the challenging ManageFirst exams and accumulate a minimum of 800 hours of industry experience.

Spring 2024 registration ongoing

New and returning students can register online at GuamCC.edu or apply or in person at the Administration Building 2000, from Monday to Friday, from 8am to 5pm. Academic advisers, financial aid personnel, and admissions staff will be available to assist students in Building 2000. The last day to register for classes is Friday, Jan. 5, 2024.

For more information on applying or registering for classes call the Office of Admissions & Registration at (671) 735-5531 or email gcc.registrar@guamcc.edu. (GCC)

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM, OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

Tel: (670) 664-2371 | Fax: (670) 664-2408 | Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950

INVITATION TO BID ITB24-GOV-42400016

SUBMISSION DATE: 9:00 AM ChST, MONDAY, JANUARY 16, 2024

SUPPLY & INSTALLATION OF TYPHOON SHUTTERS AT THE ROTA HEALTH CENTER

Governor Arnold I. Palacios and Lieutenant Governor David M. Apatang, through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), is soliciting sealed bids for the Supply & Installation of Typhoon Shutters at the Rota Health Center, Songsong village, Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). This project is funded by the 702 Capital Improvement Project funding under the U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs.

The project package will be available in digital format only on Wednesday, December 19, 2023 at the Capital Improvement Program Office, Office of the Governor, Juan A. Sablan Administration Building in Capitol Hill, Saipan, during regular working hours.

A Pre-Bid Conference will be held at the project site in Songsong village, Rota, Saipan, CNMI at 10:00 AM ChST, January 5, 2024.

Questions regarding this ITB may be submitted via email to Ms. Nerissa B. Karakaya at nerissa.benavente@gov.mp no later than 4:00 PM ChST, Thursday, January 9, 2024. All Questions & Answers will be shared with all prospective bidders.

Bidders located outside of the CNMI must fill out and submit the Notice of Intent to Bid Form to the Director of Procurement Services no later than 9:00 AM ChST, Wednesday, January 19, 2024.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS, AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/s/ ARNOLD I. PALACIOS
Governor, CNMI

/s/ BRIEN SERS NICHOLAS JR.
Acting Director, PS

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID ITB NO.: DPW24-ITB NO.: 42400014

SUBMISSION DATE: January 12, 2024 TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"Renovation of Marine Beach Restroom and Replacement of Existing Damage Concrete Picnic Tables Five (5) and Barbecue Pits Five (5)."

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE TECHNICAL SERVICES DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, LOCATED ON SECOND FLOOR, OLEAI JOETEN COMMERCIAL CENTER, SAN JOSE, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

The project package will be available on or after December 13, 2023 at Technical Services Division, Department of Public Works, located on Second Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, San Jose, Saipan. A non-refundable payment of **One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00)** is required for each set. Payment must be made to the CNMI Treasurer and a receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the Scope of Work at the DPW Technical Services Division.

There will be a **Pre-bid Conference** for this project on December 29, 2023, 9:00 a.m. local time at the **Project Site at Marine Beach**, Saipan. The Prospective bidders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the site. All question regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on January 05, 2024 to **Mr. Anthony A. Camacho, Director of Technical Services Division**, 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan or fax to (670) 234-3547. Response to questions shall be shared with prospective bidders.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/s/ RAY N. YUMUL
SECRETARY, DPW

/s/ BRIEN SERS NICHOLAS JR.
ACTING DIRECTOR,
DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY CNMI GOVERNMENT

Main Office: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2nd Floor Arrival Bldg.
P.O. BOX 501055 • SAIPAN • MP 96950
Phone: (670) 237-6500/1 • Fax: (670) 234-5962
Website: www.cnimports.com

INVITATION FOR BID PROJECT NO. CPA-IFB-001-24(REPACKAGED)

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 10, 2024: 2:00 P.M.

"SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF TWO (2) BRAND NEW PICK-UP TRUCKS TO THE FRANCISCO MANGLONA BORJA TINIAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT"

THE BID PACKAGE IS AVAILABLE FOR PICK UP BEGINNING DECEMBER 27, 2023 AT THE ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT, COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY, 2ND FLOOR, DEPARTURE BUILDING, SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT UPON PAYMENT OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE FEE OF \$100. PAYMENT SHALL BE MADE IN CASH, CASHIER'S CHECK, CREDIT CARD, OR U.S. POSTAL MONEY ORDER. ALL APPLICANTS SHALL PAY THE \$100.00 TO RECEIVE A COPY OF THE BID.

BIDDERS ARE TO SUBMIT ONE (1) ORIGINAL AND TWO (2) COPIES IN A SEALED ENVELOPE AND MARKED "SUPPLY & DELIVERY OF TWO (02) BRAND NEW PICK-UP TRUCKS TO THE FRANCISCO MANGLONA BORJA TINIAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (IFB-001-24-REPACKEAGED)" TO THE OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, 2ND FLOOR, ARRIVAL BUILDING, SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ON OR BEFORE 2:00 P.M., JANUARY 10, 2024. A 10% BID BOND OR CASHEIR'S CHECK PAYABLE TO CPA SHALL BE SUBMITTED WITH THE BID DOCUMENTS. BIDDERS SHALL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATIONS ALL CHARGES ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PROCUREMENT BEFORE FINALIZING ITS BID PRICE.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CPA PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION \$40-50-1020 AND 1025 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CPA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL BIDS, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF CPA.

LEO B. TUDELA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DATE: _____

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY CNMI GOVERNMENT

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P.O. BOX 501055 • SAIPAN • MP 96950
Phone: (670) 237-6500/1 • Fax: (670) 234-5962
Website: www.cnimports.com

INVITATION FOR BID PROJECT NO. CPA-IFB-003-24-(REPACKEAGED)

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 10, 2024: 2:00 P.M.

"SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF TWO (2) BRAND NEW SXS UTILITY VEHICLES. ONE UNIT FOR THE FRANCISCO C ADA/SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND ONE UNIT FOR THE FRANCISCO M. BORJA/TINIAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT"

THE BID PACKAGE IS AVAILABLE FOR PICK UP BEGINNING DECEMBER 27, 2023 AT THE ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT, COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY, 2ND FLOOR, DEPARTURE BUILDING, SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT UPON PAYMENT OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE FEE OF \$100. PAYMENT SHALL BE MADE IN CASH, CASHIER'S CHECK, CREDIT CARD, OR U.S. POSTAL MONEY ORDER. ALL APPLICANTS SHALL PAY THE \$100.00 TO RECEIVE A COPY OF THE BID.

BIDDERS ARE TO SUBMIT ONE (1) ORIGINAL AND TWO (2) COPIES OF THEIR BIDS IN A SEALED ENVELOPE AND MARKED "SUPPLY & DELIVERY OF TWO (02) BRAND NEW SXS UTILITY VEHICLES (IFB-003-24-REPACKEAGED)" TO THE OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, 2ND FLOOR, ARRIVAL BUILDING, SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ON OR BEFORE 2:00 P.M., JANUARY 10, 2024. A 10% BID BOND OR CASHEIR'S CHECK PAYABLE TO CPA SHALL BE SUBMITTED WITH THE BID DOCUMENTS. BIDDERS SHALL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATIONS ALL CHARGES ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PROCUREMENT BEFORE FINALIZING ITS BID PRICE.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CPA PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION \$40-50-1020 AND 1025 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CPA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL BIDS, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF CPA.

LEO B. TUDELA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DATE: _____

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Website: www.cnimports.com

INVITATION FOR BID PROJECT NO. CPA-IFB-005-24

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 10, 2024: 2:00 P.M.

"SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF TWO (2) BRAND NEW VEHICLES. ONE UNIT FOR THE FRANCISCO C ADA/SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND ONE UNIT FOR THE FRANCISCO M. BORJA/TINIAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT"

THE BID PACKAGE IS AVAILABLE FOR PICK UP BEGINNING DECEMBER 27, 2023 AT THE ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT, COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY, 2ND FLOOR, DEPARTURE BUILDING, SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT UPON PAYMENT OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE FEE OF \$100. PAYMENT SHALL BE MADE IN CASH, CASHIER'S CHECK, CREDIT CARD, OR U.S. POSTAL MONEY ORDER. ALL APPLICANTS SHALL PAY THE \$100.00 TO RECEIVE A COPY OF THE BID.

BIDDERS ARE TO SUBMIT ONE (1) ORIGINAL AND TWO (2) COPIES IN A SEALED ENVELOPE AND MARKED "SUPPLY & DELIVERY OF TWO (02) BRAND NEW VEHICLES (IFB-005-24)" TO THE OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, 2ND FLOOR, ARRIVAL BUILDING, SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ON OR BEFORE 2:00 P.M., JANUARY 10, 2024. A 10% BID BOND OR CASHEIR'S CHECK PAYABLE TO CPA SHALL BE SUBMITTED WITH THE BID DOCUMENTS. BIDDERS SHALL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATIONS ALL CHARGES ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PROCUREMENT BEFORE FINALIZING ITS BID PRICE.

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LEO B. TUDELA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DATE: _____

Opinion

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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MEMBER

AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Blinken gets it exactly right: The secretary of state's eloquent case against Hamas

In this space we do the talking, about what the Daily News deems important and worthy. But today we are giving a good chunk of our space to Secretary of State Tony Blinken. America's top diplomat gave his year-end press conference Wednesday before he left for another trip to the Mideast for the Israel-Hamas war that the terror gang launched from Gaza on Oct. 7.

Meanwhile, here on the East Side, the United Nations Security Council postponed yet again a vote on an United Arab Emirates-drafted resolution calling for a pause in the fighting to bring in aid to Gaza and allow for the hostages kidnaped by Hamas to be released.

The Monday vote became the Tuesday vote became the Wednesday vote and is now the Thursday vote because the U.S. is rightly insisting that Hamas be named as instigators of this awful war that has killed Israelis and Palestinians. Great credit to Blinken and President Joe Biden for demanding that the Security Council must call a terrorist a terrorist.

Here is Blinken: "We've talked about Israel and Gaza. Let me just say this. We believe that, as we've said from the outset, Israel has not only a right but an obligation to defend itself and to try to make sure that Oct. 7 never happens again. Any other country in the world faced with what Israel suffered on Oct. 7 would do the same thing."

"We've also said—and we've been very clear—that how Israel does it matters and matters tremendously. And there, too, we've been very deeply engaged with them to maximize protections for civilians, to maximize humanitarian assistance, to minimize harm to people in Gaza."

"One of the things that's striking to me is that, understandably, everyone would like to see this conflict end as quickly as possible, but if it ends with Hamas remaining in place and having the capacity and the stated intent to repeat Oct. 7 again and again and again, that's not in the interests of Israel, it's not in the interests of the region, it's not in the interests of the world."

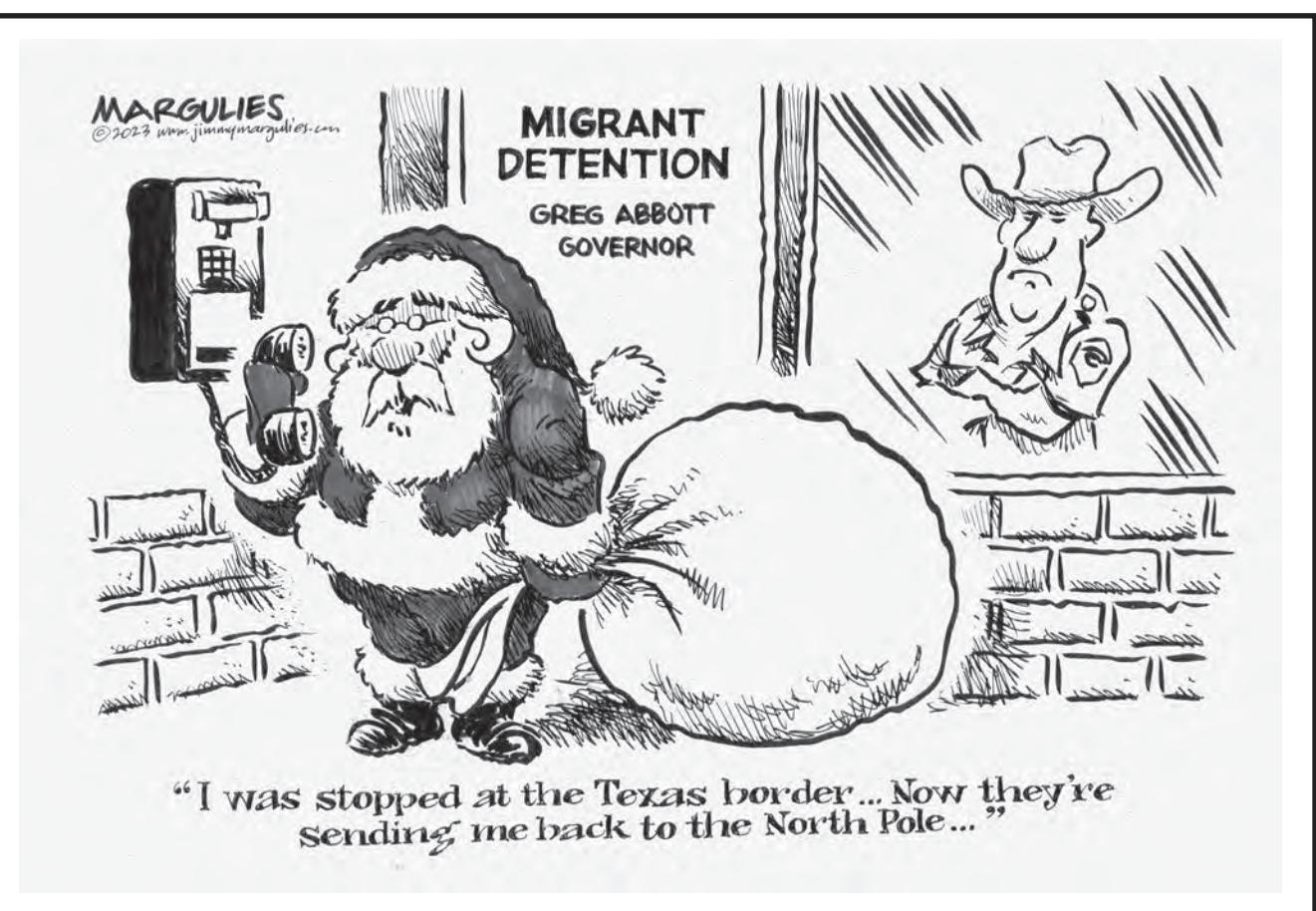
"And what is striking to me is that even as, again, we hear many countries urging the end to this conflict, which we would all like to see, I hear virtually no one saying—demanding of Hamas that it stop hiding behind civilians, that it lay down its arms, that it surrender. This is over tomorrow if Hamas does that."

"This would have been over a month ago, six weeks ago, if Hamas had done that. And how could it—how can it be that there are no demands made of the aggressor and only demands made of the victim?"

"So it would be good if there was a strong international voice pressing Hamas to do what's necessary to end this. And again, that could be tomorrow."

"And again, I come back to this basic proposition. There seems

See BLINKEN on Page 9



Can the Church of England's and Pope Francis' strides on same-sex marriage help save dying institutions?

It was a simple blessing: a giving of thanks for love, friendship and commitment. Yet this prayer, read at a church in Suffolk, east England, on Sunday morning, has become a lightning rod for England's premier religious institution.

After midnight Saturday, the Church of England—the state church, whose supreme governor is the king—sanctioned same-sex couples to be blessed for the first time in its 489-year history. Backlash to this move, as well as those recently made by other denominations, highlights the urgent challenge now facing these ailing religious institutions: Keep up with the times, or die out completely.

Just one day after the new rules over same-sex blessings (which for now can only take place within an existing service) came into force, Pope Francis enacted a similar blueprint for Roman Catholics. On Monday, he approved blessings for same-sex couples—with the caveat that they could go ahead “without any type of ritualisation or offering the impression of a marriage.” Even with that small print, it was a marked change from the Catholic Church’s decree two years ago that prayers for same-sex pairs would remain verboten as “God does not bless sin.”

The pope’s seal of approval should be an unequivocal sign that Christianity is ready to edge into the 21st century. But for the Church of England, senior figures backing the LGBTQ+ cause has so far inflamed tensions.

Support for blessing gay couples from Justin Welby and Stephen Cottrell, the archbishops respectively of Canterbury and York (the highest offices within the church), has in recent months led to calls for Welby to resign. Cottrell last month admitted that the matter is “stretching us to breaking point.” After almost a decade of debate, some bishops responded to last week’s rule change announcement by accusing the General Synod, the church’s ruling body, of creating a “tectonic divide” that may never heal. (The American counterpart denomination, the Episcopal Church, is further ahead, having allowed same-sex marriage since 2015.)

It’s all very well for religious conservatives to maintain that doctrine should be observed as it was written millennia ago. But the church’s failure to address changing social mores is playing out in half-filled pews across the Western world. Between 2013 and 2019, attendance at Sunday services in England dropped by 15%; one report estimated a further 19% fall from 2019 levels, with some churches shutting completely and others being rented out instead.

Some U.S. congregations are at a similar crossroads. Since the United Methodist Church eased off on enforcing its ban on gay and lesbian ministers and same-sex unions in 2019, a quarter of its around 30,000 U.S. churches will have broken away completely by

By CHARLOTTE LYTTON
Los Angeles Times

Charlotte Lytton is a journalist based in



this year’s Dec. 31 departure approval deadline. Meanwhile, a June Gallup poll reported a decline in church attendance of at least 10% in the U.S. since 2012.

Religious institutions appear to have missed a fundamental truth: In the age of dwindling devotion, the question is no longer what people can offer their church, but what it can offer them. Refusals to accept gay marriage—support for which remains at an all-time high in the U.S.—only highlight how out of step with society the traditionalists have become.

Although there is no denying that hard-liners might be alienated by change—and that fear of it can be powerful—it’s wrong for aging institutions (which, between the church and the monarchy, England has its share of) to assume their worshipers can’t adapt.

As I looked around at the small, primarily white-haired congregation in Suffolk, who after the service clutched celebratory glasses of fizz to toast the newly blessed couple, it was hard to understand the church’s apparent panic. One 99-year-old congregant praised the couple, two female vicars, for breathing new life into the church. Others attended after news of the service made headlines (one told me she was considering joining the congregation as a result). The vast majority was simply there to worship quietly, without inquiring into the personal lives of others, as they had done for decades.

The concern going forward is that these same-sex blessings are not the peace offering that some churches appear to think; straddling the fence may win them no friends. Campaigners lament that same-sex couples are still denied the rights of heterosexual believers—a matter the Church of England has said won’t progress before 2025. Kicking the can down the road is unlikely to help their cause, either.

Rather than debating the minutiae of religious dogma, the church (along with many other denominations) must choose between embracing our age, or going on living like it’s 1534. If they pick the latter, emptying churches around the world suggest their chance of surviving another 489 years is very slim indeed.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

With nearly 70 journalists killed, who will be left to cover the Gaza war?

In 2009, I covered the Gaza war known as Operation Cast Lead. International journalists, including myself, assembled in tents at El Arish crossing, on the Egyptian-Palestinian border, hoping to directly cover the news in the Gaza Strip. This was before social media empowered Gazans to broadcast live from their phones to ours. Yet it is important to remember that we can't equate professional journalism and social media.

Journalists cover the news, but today journalists are the news. In this current conflict journalists have been killed in Gaza, Lebanon and Israel. The Committee to Protect Journalists reported at least 68 journalists and media workers have died in this war since Oct. 7, the deadliest period for journalists since the organization started compiling data three decades ago.

This is not the whole story. According to Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, journalists are actively being targeted. The fate of journalists in Gaza is especially poignant because they provide a window into a world that has been cut off from international press and independent reporting (with the exception of one CNN journalist). Their lives matter. Journalists write the first draft of history.

The Geneva Convention, a fundamental part of international humanitarian law, requires protection of civilians and journalists during armed conflict. But in Gaza, it's almost as though journalists are being treated as combatants. Their deaths have become mere numbers, counted among the death toll of more than 20,000. One might cynically conclude that the deaths of nearly six dozen journalists is just par for the course in a war that is marked by indiscriminate bombing. But these journalists were informing the world, providing understanding and footage of Israel's relentless assault that numbers and statistics alone cannot capture.

In fact, faced with this terrible number of journalist deaths, on Dec. 15, five U.S. senators wrote a letter to President Joe Biden asking for greater protection for journalists in Gaza and for foreign

journalists to be allowed in: "We write to you today because we are deeply concerned about the inability of international journalists to enter and report from Gaza and the lack of safety for journalists covering the war in Gaza, which keeps the public from understanding the full dimensions of this war." They also called on Egypt and Israel to lift restrictions on reporting from Gaza.

When I first attempted to enter Gaza with my tape recorder and notebook in 2009, the Egyptian authorities blocked me and other journalists from doing so without the written consent of our embassies. This was quite unusual, but I was hungry to report from Gaza. I already had a letter signed by my boss at Al-Masaa newspaper saying that my assignment required me to enter Gaza. But I had to drive eight hours across the Sinai Desert to the Moroccan Embassy in Cairo, where I showed officials that letter to get the additional paperwork I needed for the Egyptian authorities.

I was surprised by a strange request from the Moroccan consular official: "You must sign a complete waiver to absolve the Kingdom of Morocco of responsibility if you are subjected to harm or killed." I was excited to report from Gaza and signed the document without a second thought, and it wasn't until much later that I noted how strange it was for my country to make me sign a waiver of liability should I die in a foreign land.

Now the killing of journalists in Gaza is being normalized with no one taking responsibility.

Journalists are also suffering in other ways. On air, there are heartbreaking and dramatic scenes of those who receive devastating news about their families while carrying out their journalistic duties. Who can forget the face of Wael Dahdouh? The Al Jazeera correspondent received the news of the killing of his wife, children and several members of his family as he was live on air describing the Israeli advance on Gaza. We watched his heart break in real time.

In the Middle East, Dahdouh is seen as the face of Gaza. Every time the region catches fire, an Al Jazeera anchor says, "And

By YOUSSEF JAJILI

Los Angeles Times

Youssef Jajili is an award-winning Moroccan journalist, writer and documentarian.



now to Wael Dahdouh" and we, the Arab audience, immediately know the reporting will center on a tragedy inside Gaza. Recently, Dahdouh was badly wounded, and yet he continued to report with bandages on his arms.

The Wael I met in 2009 was a vibrant young journalist. Thin with dark hair, he possessed a great determination to be the voice of his people to the world. I was introduced to him by Muhammad Issa Saadallah, a journalist in Gaza at Al-Ayyam newspaper, who is famous for guiding foreign journalists through the area. Saadallah is a consummate professional and a tireless advocate for Palestinian justice. I wonder about his fate in this brutal war, as I have not received any updates.

Last year, the world was stunned by the killing of Palestinian American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh as she reported from the West Bank town of Jenin. In a landmark 2021 video, she recounted: "In the difficult moments, I overcame my fear because I chose journalism in order to be close to the people. It might not be easy for me to change the reality, but at least I was able to convey the people's message and voice to the world."

In May, a year after her death, the Israel Defense Forces apologized for her killing after conceding a "high possibility" that she was shot by an Israeli soldier. Speaking about her death, chief IDF spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said, "We want journalists to feel safe in Israel, especially in wartime."

How empty these words feel right now.

Today journalists are dying in this war at a staggering rate with zero accountability from the IDF. If this pace continues, who will be left to accurately report from this conflict zone?

Palestine deserves to be free. Israel deserves to exist. How do we give peace better PR?

Recently, in a downtown Los Angeles hipster coffee shop, I was waiting for the bathroom when I spotted a blackboard covered with phrases. One rendered in large mint-green cursive caught my eye: "Free Palestine," it read, with a cartoon heart as punctuation. I picked up chalk, found an adjacent clearing and scrawled, "Two-state solution," followed by the same adolescent heart-shape. It wasn't that I disagreed with the original author's statement; I just think peace needs better PR.

I didn't grow up with the two-state solution. I come from a half-Jewish household, the Jewish half of which is Zionist. I was raised on which candidates would protect Israel, along with stories of how strangers welcomed my dad "home" at Ben Gurion Airport or how he packed chickens in a kibbutz.

In college, I studied Israeli contemporary dance, writing about giants in the field such as Ohad Naharin, and conducted archival research at the Suzanne Dellal Centre in Tel Aviv. In the Lisbon, Portugal, airport, on the way to Israel, I was detained for additional screening. An Israeli transportation officer didn't believe that a 22-year-old man, traveling alone for four days to Israel, was going there to do dance research, whether he was Jewish or not. I brought research books out of my backpack to convince the officer. When I was finally let through and then landed in Israel, my luggage didn't arrive. An Israeli friend's parents generously lent me the underwear and clothes I needed until my bag came. In spite of the hiccup, I loved Israel. Tel Aviv was chic, vibrant and diverse.

Then, one year ago, my cousin on my mom's side, which is Christian, married a Palestinian American. For their wedding, I traveled again to Israel, this time to the West Bank, to a Christian village called Taybeh. The ceremony was held outside on the ruins of a 4th century Palestinian Orthodox church. I spent four days with my cousin and her betrothed, eating hummus and za'atar crackers and emphasizing my 50% Italian American heritage from my mother to avoid suspicion. I learned how to shrug

my shoulders and undulate my hands in the style of Palestinian social dance. I met hundreds of uncles and aunts and cousins. I toured the town's breweries and distilleries: of wine, arak (an ouzo-like spirit) and their specialty, Palestinian beer.

On brewery and distillery tours, which mostly concerned the granular production process, guides also showed the cisterns on their roofs. The large vats collect rainwater, they explained, because it's never clear when the Israeli-run water company will turn off their supply. The guides also described the tricky process of export: Israeli soldiers let cases of wine spoil for hours in hot sunlight, and few shipments reach their U.S. or European destinations.

During the wedding reception with more than 200 guests, the water was shut off. The bride, groom and guests were suddenly unable to wash their hands or flush the toilets. At my table, where big bottles of water were served alongside Coca-Cola, Taybeh beer, wine and arak, the groom's cousin asked what I had studied in school. "Israeli dance," I replied. The cousin furrowed his brow. "I didn't know Israelis danced!" he exclaimed. "I thought they just shot people." I turned to the dance floor, where, alongside fist-pumping men, the groom's grandmother bounced on her knees, beaming, swinging her arms and mouthing Arabic lyrics. "Yes, Israelis also dance," I replied.

In recent weeks, my social media feeds have become inundated with flags and slogans: condemning Hamas attacks, standing with Israel, showing carnage in Gaza, advocating for a free Palestine. In between are the requisite virtue signalers: My heart goes out to all, both Israeli and Palestinian, affected by this horrible tragedy. I promised myself I wouldn't engage. The ethno-nationalist posturing or obsequious drivel, I felt, was counterproductive. Wouldn't any involvement reducible to a slogan be unhelpful?

Looking at the hipster coffee shop message board, I realized that the problem isn't so much that existing messaging is too simplistic. It's that there isn't a clear and exciting enough sym-

By WILLIAM KEISER

Los Angeles Times

William Keiser is a Los Angeles-based screenwriter whose most recent pilot, The Revolutionary Potential of Dance, is about historical anti capitalist movements in America.



bol for a middle way, a two-state solution. Palestine deserves to be free. Israel also doesn't need to cease existing or protecting itself to make that happen.

Israel could give up a significant piece of its territory, its apartheid policies and any future settler expansion; Palestine could gain a corridor "from the river to the sea" and give up the right to a terrorist government that murders Jews. Both sides could teach their children about the other's very real history of genocidal victimhood.

But compromise doesn't have the resonance that "Free Palestine" or "I stand with Israel" has. It doesn't hijack our limbic systems like the flags and phrases littering our homes, streets and feeds. Still, perhaps it could. Maybe, in an outrage-fueled system, peace and objective truth simply need sexier branding.

BLINKEN

From page 8

to be silence on what Hamas could do, should do, must do if we want to end the suffering of innocent men, women, and children. It would be, I think, good if the world could unite around that proposition as well."

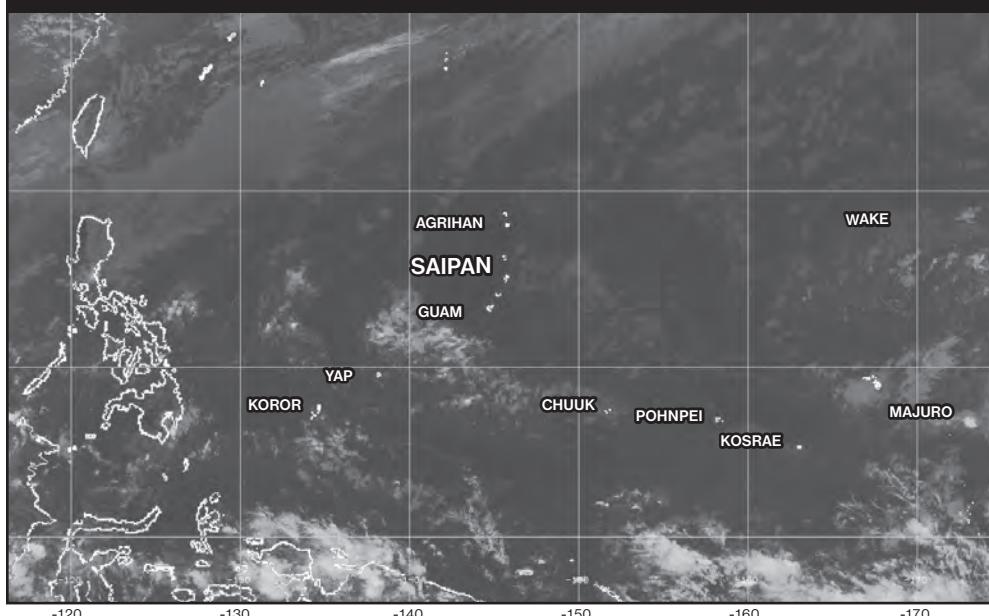
Well said, Mr. Secretary.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Partly sunny with scattered showers for Guam and Rota. Partly cloudy with isolated showers for Tinian and Saipan. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy becoming mostly cloudy Thursday night. Isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Breezy over the weekend. Mostly cloudy. A 30 percent chance of showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.	Breezy over the weekend. Mostly cloudy. A 30 percent chance of showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.	Breezy over the weekend. Mostly cloudy. A 30 percent chance of showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.
86	77°	86	77°	86
86	77°	86	77°	86

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 6:08 AM TUESDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2023

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite imagery showing decreasing skies with scattered showers pushing out of the Guam coastal waters this morning with partly cloudy skies and isolated trade showers taking hold. Latest buoy and altimetry data indicating seas of 7 to 9 feet. Winds are moderate to fresh.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: <https://www.weather.gov/gum/>

MICRONESIA		
	▲	▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Mostly Cloudy	88° / 79°
Palau	Partly Cloudy	85° / 78°
Yap	Partly Cloudy	86° / 79°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	86° / 80°
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	85° / 78°
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	85° / 78°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:40 AM	5:54 PM
Thursday	6:41 AM	5:55 PM
Friday	6:41 AM	5:55 PM
Saturday	6:42 AM	5:56 PM
Sunday	6:42 AM	5:56 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	6:42 AM	6:02 PM
Thursday	-	7:36 AM	6:58 PM
Friday	-	8:26 AM	7:53 PM
Saturday	-	9:10 AM	8:45 PM
Sunday	-	9:50 AM	9:35 PM

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AROUND THE GLOBE

	▲	▼ °F
Auckland	Fair	79° / 68°
Beijing	Fair	37° / 15°
Hong Kong	Fair	64° / 54°
Honolulu	Showers	82° / 73°
London	Sunny	43° / 34°
Los Angeles	Clear	56° / 40°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	90° / 77°
Melbourne	Rain	66° / 55°
Miami	Mostly Sunny	78° / 71°
New York	Mist	48° / 43°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	52° / 36°
Paris	Partly Cloudy	39° / 28°
Busan	Sunny	44° / 29°
Rome	Mostly Sunny	55° / 39°
Salem	Partly Cloudy	70° / 54°
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	59° / 48°
Seoul	Fair	42° / 21°
Tokyo	Sunny	55° / 39°
Washington, DC	Cloudy	59° / 42°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY FEET

1:50 AM	Low Tide	-0.68
9:11 AM	High Tide	1.70
2:25 PM	Low Tide	1.14
6:50 PM	High Tide	1.67

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 20, 2023

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA076 9:50AM 10:35AM Daily				UA174 8:00AM 8:45AM Daily			
SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)				NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN			
UA824 7:05AM 9:45AM 1, 3, 5				UA825 9:25PM 2:00AM+1 2, 4, 7			
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
PR 111 5:55AM 7:55AM Daily				UA189 00:40AM 6:30AM 3, 6			
UA193 7:50PM 11:50PM 2, 5 via Palau				PR110 10:05PM 3:55AM+1 Daily			
UA183 7:55PM 9:50PM Daily				UA192 10:40PM 6:30AM+1 2, 5 via Palau			
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				UA184 10:55PM 4:45AM+1 1, 3, 4, 6, 7			
SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
TW308 2:15AM 6:10AM Daily				UA189/174 00:40AM 8:45AM+1 3, 6 via Guam			
7C3403/2305 4:40AM 10:20PM Daily				UA192/174 10:40PM 8:45AM+1 2, 5 via Palau, Guam			
UA076/183 9:50AM 9:50PM Daily via Guam				UA184/174 10:55PM 8:45AM+1 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via Guam			
UA076/193 9:50AM 11:50PM 2, 5 via Guam, Palau				7C2306/3406 11:15PM 3:30PM+1 Daily			

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. (The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 30, 2023

SAIPAN TO ROTA					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Oct 21-31, 2023
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily
ROTA TO SAIPAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Oct 21-31, 2023
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily
ROTA TO GUAM					

Business

China approves 105 online games after draft curbs trigger massive losses

BANGKOK (AP)—China's press and publications authority has approved 105 new online games, saying it fully supports the industry after proposed curbs caused massive losses last week for investors in major games makers.

The National Press and Publication Administration issued a statement on its WeChat social media account Monday saying the approvals by the Game Working Committee of China Music and Digital Association were "positive signals that support the prosperity and healthy development of the online game industry."

Tencent's "Counter War: Future" and NetEase's "Firefly Assault" were among games approved.

Draft guidelines for curbs



People play online games in an internet cafe in Fuyang in central China's Anhui province Friday, March 1, 2019.

on online gaming had caused share prices of video game makers like Tencent and Ne-

tease to plunge on Friday, causing losses of tens of billions of dollars and dragging

Chinese benchmarks lower. The administration's guidelines said online games would

be banned from offering incentives for daily log-ins or purchases. Other restrictions include limiting how much users can recharge and issuing warnings for "irrational consumption behavior."

On Friday, NetEase's Nasdaq-traded shares fell 16.1% while its Hong Kong-traded shares sank 25%. Tencent's closed 12% lower. Huya Inc., a smaller online games maker, lost 10.7% on the New York Stock Exchange. Overall, the companies lost tens of billions of dollars in market value.

Hong Kong's market was closed Monday for the Christmas holiday. Share prices in Shanghai were flat.

The Press and Publication Administration said that in 2023, 1,075 game version numbers had been issued, of which 977 were domestically produced and 98 were imported.

It also cited a "2023 China Game Industry Report" that it said showed sales rev-

enue for the domestic online games market exceeded 300 billion yuan (\$42 billion) in 2023, with the number of people playing the games reaching 668 million.

"The Game Working Committee hopes that member units will take this opportunity to launch more high-quality products, promote high-quality development of the online game industry, and contribute to promoting cultural prosperity and development and building a culturally powerful country," it said.

China has taken various measures against the online games sector in recent years.

In 2021, regulators limited the amount of time children could spend on games to just three hours a week, expressing concern about addiction to video gaming. Approvals of new video games were suspended for about eight months but resumed in April 2022 as a broader crackdown on the entire technology industry was eased.

THE SECRET LIFE OF GIFT CARDS

Here's what happens to the billions that go unspent each year

By DEE-ANN DURBIN
AP BUSINESS WRITER

Gift cards make great stocking stuffers—just as long as you don't stuff them in a drawer and forget about them after the holidays.

Americans are expected to spend nearly \$30 billion on gift cards this holiday season, according to the National Retail Federation. Restaurant gift cards are the most popular, making up one-third of those sales.

Most of those gift cards will be redeemed. Paytronix, which tracks restaurant gift card sales, says around 70% of gift cards are used within six months.

But many cards—tens of billions of dollars' worth—wind up forgotten or otherwise unused. That's when the life of a gift card gets more complicated, with expiration dates or inactivity fees that can vary by state.

Here's what to know about the gift cards you're giving—or getting:

Loved, but lost

After clothing, gift cards will be the most popular present this holiday season. Nearly half of Americans plan to give them, according to the National Retail Federation.

But many will remain unspent.

Gift cards get lost or forgotten, or recipients hang on to them for a special occasion. In a July survey, the consumer finance company Bankrate found that 47% of U.S. adults had at least one unspent gift card or voucher. The average value of unused gift cards is \$187 per person, a total of \$23 billion.

The gift of time

Under a federal law that went into effect in 2010, a gift card can't expire for five years from the time it was purchased or from the last time someone added money to it. Some state laws require an even longer period. In New York, for instance, any gift card purchased after Dec. 10, 2022, can't expire for nine years.

Differing state laws are one reason many stores have stopped using expiration dates altogether, says Ted Rossman, a senior industry analyst at Bankrate.

USE IT OR LOSE IT

While it may take gift cards years to expire, experts say it's still wise to spend them quickly. Some cards—especially generic cash cards from Visa or MasterCard—will start accruing inactivity fees if they're not used for a year, which eats

away at their value. Inflation also makes cards less valuable over time. And if a retail store closes or goes bankrupt, a gift card could be worthless.

Perhaps consider clearing out your stash on National Use Your Gift Card Day, a five-year-old holiday created by a public relations executive and now backed by multiple retailers. The next one is Jan. 20, 2024.

Or sell it

If you have a gift card you don't want, one option is to sell it on a site like CardCash or Raise. Rossman says resale sites won't give you face value for your cards, but they will typically give 70 to 80 cents per dollar.

The money trail

What happens to the money when a gift card goes unused? It depends on the state where the retailer is incorporated.

When you buy a gift card, a retailer can use that money right away. But it also becomes a liability; the retailer has to plan for the possibility that the gift card will be redeemed.

Every year, big companies calculate "breakage," which is the amount of gift card liability they believe won't be redeemed based on historical averages. For some companies, like Seat-

tle-based Starbucks, breakage is a huge profit-driver. Starbucks reported \$212 million in revenue from breakage in 2022.

But in at least 19 states—including Delaware, where many big companies are incorporated—retailers must work with state unclaimed property programs to return money from unspent gift cards to consumers. Money that isn't recovered by individual consumers is spent on public service initiatives; in the states' view, it shouldn't go to companies because they haven't provided a service to earn it.

Claim it

All 50 states and the District of Columbia have unclaimed property programs. Combined, they return around \$3 billion to consumers annually, says Misha Werschkul, the executive director of the Washington State Budget and Policy Center.

Werschkul says it can be tricky to find the holders of unspent gift cards, but the growing number of digital cards that name the recipient helps. State unclaimed property offices jointly run the website MissingMoney.com, where consumers can search by name for any unclaimed property they're owed, including cash from gift cards.

"and for this to happen as soon as operationally possible."

The Houthis are Iranian-backed rebels who seized Yemen's capital, Sanaa, in 2014, launching a grinding war against a Saudi-led coalition seeking to restore the government. The Houthis have sporadically targeted ships in the region, but the attacks have increased since the start of the Israel-Hamas war.

Citadel announces leadership changes

Citadel Pacific Ltd., the parent company of IT&E, announced yesterday a strategic realignment aimed at further strengthening its commitment to leading innovation and excellence.

Effective January 2024, IT&E chief executive officer Jim Oehlerking will transition to a key role as chief technology officer of Citadel Data Centers, the newest addition to the Citadel portfolio of companies.

Citadel Data Centers will strategically deliver reliable and secure data storage and bring computing power closer to the user. The latest Tier 3 platform designs offer low-latency, secure, and seamless connections across our carrier and Cloud neutral, energy-efficient facilities, bridging gaps across Asia Pacific's fastest-growing emerging markets.

Since 2015, Oehlerking has been an integral part of IT&E's success, serving as CEO. Under his leadership IT&E has continued to expand and upgrade its cellular, internet, and Enterprise/IT service offerings across Guam and the CNMI, with a planned 2024 Q1 launch of high speed 5G.

In his new role as the CTO of Citadel Data Centers, Oehlerking will bring a wealth of experience and expertise to oversee and drive the evolution and development of our best-in-class data centers.

Also, effective January 2024, David Gibson will assume the



role as IT&E CEO. Gibson will assure our presence and further our commitment to our communities, customers, and partners in Guam and the CNMI.

Gibson has over 25 years of experience in the telecommunications industry as a seasoned leader and strategist. He comes to IT&E from Commnet Broadband, where he served as chief revenue officer. His previous roles include president of Locke Hill Advisors, senior vice president, Carrier & Wholesale Sales of First Light Fiber; and vice president, Business Development of BayRing Communications, and more. His community involvement includes school board chairperson for the Barrington, New Hampshire School District. Gibson holds a BS from the University of New Hampshire.

"As we continue on this exciting journey, our commitment to our valued customers and the communities we serve remains unwavering. Under Jim and David's guidance, we pledge to continue delivering cutting-edge telecommunications solutions while fostering community engagement initiatives. We are confident that this leadership change will not only enhance our company's standing in the industry but also strengthen our bonds with the people and places we proudly connect,"

said Jim Beighley, CPL Pacific CEO and head of Strategy and Mergers and Acquisitions. (PR)

Maersk preparing to resume Red Sea voyages

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP)—Shipping firm Maersk says that it's preparing to allow vessels to resume sailing through the Red Sea, thanks to the start of a U.S.-led multinational naval operation to protect shipping from attacks by Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Houthi attacks have led to a major disruption of shipping

through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, one of the most important arteries for trade in oil, natural gas, grain and consumer goods between Europe and Asia.

Maersk said in a statement Sunday that "we have received confirmation that the previously announced multi-national security initiative Operation

and for this to happen as soon as operationally possible."

Prosperity Guardian (OPG) has now been set up and deployed to allow maritime commerce to pass through the Red Sea-Gulf of Aden and once again return to using the Suez Canal as a gateway between Asia and Europe."

The company said it was working on plans for the first vessels to make the journey

Nation

Biden orders strike on Iranian-aligned group after 3 US troops hurt in Iraq attack

WASHINGTON (AP)—



President Joe Biden ordered the U.S. military to carry out retaliatory strikes against Iranian-backed militia groups after three U.S. service-members were injured in a drone attack in northern Iraq.

National Security Council spokeswoman Adrienne Watson said one of the U.S. troops

suffered critical injuries in the attack that occurred earlier Monday. The Iranian-backed militia Kataib Hezbollah and affiliated groups, under an umbrella of Iranian-backed militants, claimed credit for the attack that utilized a one-way attack drone.

Biden, who is spending Christmas at the presidential

retreat at Camp David, Maryland, was alerted about the attack by White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan shortly after it occurred on Monday and ordered the Pentagon and his top national security aides to prepare response options to the attack on Erbil Air Base.

Sullivan consulted with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. Biden's deputy national se-

curity adviser, Jon Finer, was with the president at Camp David and convened top aides to review options, according to a U.S. official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and requested anonymity.

Within hours, Biden convened his national security team for a call in which Austin and Gen. CQ Brown, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, briefed Biden on the

response options. Biden opted to target three locations used by Kataib Hezbollah and affiliated groups, the official said.

The U.S. strikes were carried out at about 4:45 a.m. on Tuesday in Iraq, less than 13 hours after the U.S. personnel were attacked. According to U.S. Central Command, the retaliatory strikes on the three sites, "destroyed the targeted facilities and likely killed a number of Kataib Hezbollah militants."

"The President places no higher priority than the protection of American personnel serving in harm's way," Watson said. "The United States will act at a time and in a manner of our choosing should these attacks continue."

The latest attack on U.S. troops follows months of escalating threats and actions against American forces in the region since the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel that sparked the devastating war in Gaza.

The dangerous back-and-forth strikes have escalated since Iranian-backed militant groups under the umbrella group called the Islamic Resistance in Iraq and Syria began striking U.S. facilities Oct. 17, the date that a blast at a hospital in Gaza killed hundreds. Iranian-backed militias have carried out dozens of attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria since

the start of the Israel-Hamas war more than two months ago.

The U.S. has also blamed Iran, which has funded and trained Hamas, for attacks by Yemen's Houthi militants against commercial and military vessels through a critical shipping choke point in the Red Sea.

The Biden administration has sought to prevent the Israel-Hamas war from spiraling into a wider regional conflict that either opens up new fronts of Israeli fighting or that draws the U.S. in directly. The administration's measured response—where not every attempt on American troops has been met with a counter-attack—has drawn criticism from Republicans.

The U.S. has thousands of troops in Iraq training Iraqi forces and combating remnants of the Islamic State group, and hundreds in Syria, mostly on the counter-IS mission. They have come under dozens of attacks, though as yet none fatal, since the war began on Oct. 7, with the U.S. attributing responsibility to Iran-backed groups.

"While we do not seek to escalate conflict in the region, we are committed and fully prepared to take further necessary measures to protect our people and our facilities," Austin said in a statement.

Holiday travel is mostly nice, but with some naughty disruptions on Southwest Airlines

Conditions were mostly nice this year for travelers flying ahead of and on Christmas, but some naughty disruptions again plagued those flying with Southwest Airlines.

For millions of people traveling over the holiday, this year was much better than last. Christmas morning put a bow on a relatively smooth weekend.

Only 157 flights within, into or out of the U.S. had been canceled and 2,111 were delayed as of late afternoon on Monday, according to the tracking website FlightAware.

For this holiday season, U.S. airlines prepared for massive waves of travelers by hiring thousands of pilots, flight attendants and other workers—in an effort to avoid the delays and cancellations that marred travel in 2022, culminating



Holiday travelers pass by "Phoebe" the Flamingo at the Tampa International Airport, Friday, Dec. 22, 2023, in Tampa, Fla.

with the Southwest Airlines debacle that stranded more than 2 million people.

Still, Southwest experienced hiccups again over the weekend that the airline was looking to clear by Monday. Just 2% of the airline's flights were canceled

Monday, though 16% were delayed, which is 693 flights total, according to FlightAware.

On Saturday and Sunday, Southwest canceled 426 flights and delayed 2,689 flights, FlightAware data showed.

A Southwest spokesperson

blamed the issues on dense fog in Chicago on Saturday and Sunday that prevented planes from landing and said some additional cancellations may be necessary Monday ahead of what was expected to be a full recovery on Tuesday. (AP)

ACROSS THE NATION

Suspect found dead after standoff, fire at California home on Christmas Eve

HERMOSA BEACH, Calif. (AP)—An armed man who faced off with officers at a California home for several hours on Christmas Eve was later found dead in the home's garage, authorities told local media. The Los Angeles County Fire Department responded to a 911 call on 11th Street in Hermosa Beach around 3:30 p.m. on Sunday, KTLA-TV reported. A witness said neighbors heard an argument and saw a man with a gun who went into the two-story home and refused to surrender to police who arrived at the scene, KTLA reported. The garage at the home caught fire shortly before 5 p.m., KTLA reported. Hermosa Beach Police Chief Paul LeBaron said the suspect's immediate family members, including children, fled before police arrived, KTLA reported.

California police seek a suspect in the hit-and-run deaths of 2 young siblings

ANTIOCH, Calif. (AP)—Authorities in

community are seeking a suspect in a hit-and-run collision that killed two young brothers on Friday. Police responded to a reported traffic collision at an intersection in Antioch around 11:30 p.m., the Antioch Police Department said in a statement. Officers arrived at the scene of an accident involving two vehicles, including one carrying two boys, aged 12 and 13. The boys were transported by ambulance to area hospitals but died of their injuries, police said. The driver of one of the vehicles fled on foot, police said. "It appears speed and reckless driving were factors in this incident," the police statement said.

A witness reported seeing a black SUV speed past. He heard a crash and went to the scene, where he found the driver of the car that apparently was hit by the SUV, KGO-TV reported.

Woman who was shot in the head during pursuit sues Mississippi's Capitol Police

JACKSON, Miss. (AP)—A woman who was shot in the head while she was a passenger in a car fleeing from police has filed a federal lawsuit against a

state-run department in Mississippi's capital city. Sherita Harris was shot in the head during an August 2022 pursuit that began after a traffic stop in Jackson, according to a lawsuit filed Wednesday in the U.S. Southern District of Mississippi. Two officers from the Capitol Police, who patrol an area home to many government buildings, stopped a car driven by Harris' friend for running a red light. The lawsuit, which alleges excessive force, says an officer began firing into the car after the traffic stop. A spokesperson for the Mississippi Department of Public Safety, which oversees the Capitol Police, did not immediately respond to an email requesting comment. Police have not confirmed whether Harris was shot by an officer, NBCNews.com reported. The officers have said the car Harris was in fled after they exited their patrol vehicle and that they heard gunshots coming from the car as they gave chase, court records show. One of the officers fired at the vehicle and it crashed into a curb.

A man is killed and a woman injured in a

'targeted' afternoon shooting at a Florida shopping mall

OCALA, Fla. (AP)—Authorities in central Florida issued an arrest warrant Sunday for a 39-year-old man accused of fatally shooting another man at a shopping mall two days before Christmas in which police say the victim was "targeted." As of Sunday afternoon, the suspect hadn't been located, and the Ocala Police Department was offering a \$5,000 award for any information leading to his arrest. The arrest warrant was for premeditated first-degree murder and attempted premeditated first-degree murder, the police department said on social media. Ocala Police Chief Mike Balken told reporters Saturday evening that the victim was killed after he was shot multiple times in a common area at Paddock Mall in Ocala, located about 80 miles (127 kilometers) northwest of Orlando. A woman also was shot in the leg. She was treated at a local hospital and expected to recover, Balken said. The suspect fled the scene and left behind the firearm, Balken said.

people were killed in a November 2022 shooting at an LGBTQ+ nightclub.

What exactly motivated the shooter, who didn't grow up in Colorado Springs and is now serving life in prison, may never be known. But the attack killed five people, wounded 17 others and shattered the sense of safety at Club Q, which served as a refuge for the city's LGBTQ+ community.

A fight broke out between two groups of people in the afternoon at the Citadel Mall in Colorado Springs and officers received a report of gunshots and responded, the Colorado Springs Police Department said. One adult male was dead at the scene with a gunshot wound, and two more people, who were shot at least once, were taken to hospitals, where they were in stable but serious conditions Monday, police said.

A woman was also taken to a hospital with what were said to be minor injuries.

Police initially said they had detained "multiple people" and were "working to determine their involvement." However, they said Monday that no arrests have been made.

The mall was cleared and closed, police said, and there was no known threat to the community on Monday.

Colorado Springs, about 71 miles (114 kilometers) south of Denver, is Colorado's second-largest city—and where five

there have been other shootings in recent years at the mall, according to The Gazette of Colorado Springs, including one that broke out during a fight in 2022 that wounded a 12-year-old girl who was a bystander. Her mother is suing the mall's owners, alleging they have failed to implement adequate security measures. In the six-and-a-half years before her daughter was wounded, she says there have been at least six shootings. The owners denied the allegations in a court filing. The girl was shot in the chest and was paralyzed from the waist down, according to the lawsuit.

A telephone message and email sent to mall management on Monday was not immediately returned.

Asia

Indon plant explosion kills 13 and injures 46

PALU, Indonesia (AP)—A smelting furnace exploded Sunday at a Chinese-owned nickel plant on Indonesia's Sulawesi island, killing at least 13 workers and injuring dozens of others, police and a company official said.

It was the latest in a series of deadly incidents at nickel smelting plants in Indonesia that are part of China's ambitious transnational development program known as the Belt and Road Initiative.

Nickel is a key component in global battery production for electric vehicles.

At least four Chinese and nine Indonesian workers died when the furnace exploded while they were repairing it, said Central Sulawesi police chief Agus Nugroho.

The blast was so powerful it demolished the furnace and damaged parts of the side walls of the building, said Nugroho, adding that about 46 workers were injured, including 14 Chinese nationals, some in critical condition.

Authorities are working to determine whether negligence by the company led to the deaths, Nugroho said.

The accident occurred at PT Indonesia Tsingshan Stainless Steel, a subsidiary of PT Indonesia Morowali Industrial Park, known as PT IMIP, in

the Bahodopi neighborhood of Morowali regency.

"We sincerely apologize for this incident and we are working closely with authorities to investigate what caused the accident," said company spokesperson Deddy Kurniawan.

Rescuers extinguished the fire and evacuated workers after a nearly four-hour operation, he added.

In a statement released Sunday afternoon by the company, Kurniawan said the furnace was under maintenance and not operating at the time. However, "residual slag in the furnace" came in contact "with flammable items" driving the furnace walls to collapse and the remaining steel slag to flow out.

Previously, the company said explosive liquids at the bottom of the furnace triggered a fire and a subsequent explosion in nearby oxygen cylinders.

It was the third deadly incident this year at Chinese-owned nickel smelting plants in Central Sulawesi province, which has the largest nickel reserves in Indonesia.

Two dump truck operators were killed when they were engulfed by a wall of black sludge-like material following the collapse of a nickel waste disposal site in April.

In January, two workers, including a Chinese national,

were killed in riots that involved workers and security guards at an Indonesia-China joint venture in North Morowali regency.

Last year, a loader truck ran over and killed a Chinese worker while he was repairing a road in PT IMIP's mining area, and an Indonesian man burned to death when a furnace in the company's factory exploded.

Nearly 50% of PT IMIP's shares are owned by a Chinese holding company, and the rest are owned by two Indonesian companies. It began smelter operations in 2013 and is now the largest nickel-based industrial area in Indonesia.

Three Chinese workers in March filed a complaint to Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights, alleging that their health is deteriorating due to dust and smoke exposure while working seven-day weeks without a break at PT IMIP. They added that workers there don't have adequate safety equipment.

Data collected by the Mining Advocacy Network, an Indonesian watchdog, showed that at least 22 workers from China and Indonesia have died in nickel smelting plants in Central Sulawesi province since 2019, including two Chinese nationals who committed suicide.

276 Indians stuck in a French airport arrive in India

VATRY, France (AP)—A charter plane that was grounded in France for a human trafficking investigation arrived in India with 276 Indians aboard early Tuesday, authorities said. The passengers had been heading to Nicaragua but were instead blocked inside the Vatry Airport for four days in an exceptional holiday ordeal.

The regional administration said that 276 of the original 303 passengers were en route to Mumbai, and that 25 others requested asylum in France.

Those who remained were transferred to a special zone in Paris' Charles de Gaulle airport for asylum-seekers, it said. The passengers grounded in France had included a 21-month-old child and several unaccompanied minors.

The remaining two passengers were initially detained as part of a human trafficking investigation but were released Monday after appearing before a judge, the Paris prosecutor's office said. The judge named them as "assisted witnesses" to the case, a special status un-

der French law that allows time for further investigation and could lead to eventual charges or to the case being dropped.

The Legend Airlines A340 plane stopped Thursday for refueling in Vatry en route from Fujairah airport in the United Arab Emirates for Managua, Nicaragua, and was grounded by police based on an anonymous tip that it could be carrying human trafficking victims.

Prosecutors wouldn't comment on whether the passengers' ultimate destination could have been the U.S., which has seen a surge in Indians crossing the Mexico-U.S. border this year.

French authorities are working to determine the aim of the original flight, and opened a judicial inquiry into activities by an organized criminal group helping foreigners enter or stay in a country illegally, the prosecutor's office said.

It did not specify Monday whether human trafficking—which the U.N. defines as "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt

of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit"—is still suspected.

The Vatry airport was requisitioned by police for days. Local officials, medics and volunteers installed cots and ensured regular meals and showers for those held inside. Then it turned into a makeshift courtroom Sunday as judges, lawyers and interpreters filled the terminal to carry out emergency hearings to determine the next steps.

Some lawyers at Sunday's hearings protested authorities' handling of the situation and the passengers' rights, suggesting that police and prosecutors overreacted to the anonymous tip.

The Indian Embassy posted its thanks on X, formerly Twitter, to French officials for ensuring that the Indians could go home. French authorities worked through Christmas Eve and Christmas morning on formalities to allow passengers to leave France, regional prosecutor Annick Browne told The Associated Press.

World

At least 68 killed in Gaza airstrike



AP In this image from video, people look over some of the bodies which arrived at Al Aqsa hospital in Deir El Balah, Gaza on Sunday night, Dec. 24, 2023, after three strikes hit Central Gaza.

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza (AP)—At least 68 people were killed by an Israeli strike in central Gaza, health officials said Sunday, while the number of Israeli soldiers killed in combat over the weekend rose to 17.

■ ■ ■
JERUSALEM (AP)—Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vows to expand Gaza operation, says war 'isn't close to finished.'

■ ■ ■
Associated Press journalists

at a nearby hospital watched frantic Palestinians carry the dead, including a baby, and wounded following the strike on the Maghazi refugee camp east of Deir al-Balah. One bloodied young girl looked stunned while her body was checked for broken bones.

The 68 fatalities include at least 12 women and seven children, according to early hospital figures.

"We were all targeted," said Ahmad Turkmani, who lost several family members

Ukraine says it shot down Russian fighter jets and drones

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Monday hailed the shooting down of two Russian fighter jets on Christmas Eve and said "this Christmas sets the right mood for the entire year ahead."

In a Christmas message marking the first time the country has officially observed the holiday on Dec. 25 rather than Jan. 7, Zelenskyy

also referred to Ukraine's claim to have destroyed a further three Russian fighter planes on Friday.

"The stronger our air defense, the fewer Russian devils will be in our skies and on our land," Zelenskyy said, praising Ukraine's "capabilities in negotiations with partners, capabilities in bolstering our sky shield, capabilities

WORLD BRIEFS

Imprisoned Russian politician Navalny is now in a penal colony near the Arctic Circle

MOSCOW (AP)—Associates of imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny said Monday that he has been located at a prison colony above the Arctic Circle nearly three weeks after contact with him was lost. Navalny, the most prominent foe of Russian President Vladimir Putin, is serving a 19-year sentence on charges of extremism. He had been imprisoned in the Vladimir region of central Russia, about 230 kilometers (140 miles) east of Moscow, but his lawyers said they had not

been able to reach him since Dec. 6. His spokesperson, Kira Yarmysh, said he was located in a prison colony in the town of Kharp, in the Yamalo-Nenets region about 1,900 kilometers (1,200 miles) northeast of Moscow. Navalny is "fine—at least as much as possible after such a long stage" and a lawyer visited him, Yarmysh told The Associated Press.

Turkey steps up airstrikes against Kurdish groups in Syria and Iraq after 12 soldiers were killed

QAMISHLI, Syria (AP)—Turkey intensified its air-

strikes against Kurdish groups in Syria and northern Iraq in retaliation for the deaths of 12 Turkish soldiers in Iraq over the weekend.

Earlier, the Health Ministry in Gaza gave the death toll as 70. The Israeli military had no immediate comment.

As Christmas Eve fell, smoke rose over the besieged territory, while in the West Bank Bethlehem was hushed, its holiday celebrations called off. In neighboring Egypt, tentative efforts continued on a deal for another exchange of hostages for Palestinians held by Israel.

The war has devastated parts of Gaza, killed roughly 20,400 Palestinians and displaced almost all of the territory's 2.3 million people.

The mounting death toll among Israeli troops—156 since the ground offensive began—could erode public support for the war, which was sparked when Hamas-led militants stormed communities in southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing 1,200 and taking 240 hostage.

Israelis still largely stand behind the country's stated goals of crushing Hamas' governing and military capabilities and releasing the remaining 129 captives. That's despite rising international pressure against Israel's offensive, and the soaring death toll and unprecedented suffering among Palestinians.

in defending our homeland from Russian terrorists."

His upbeat assessment comes amid growing concern about battlefield disappointments and about the future of Western aid for Ukraine's war effort. Despite high hopes for a summer counteroffensive, the front line has barely moved and political disputes in allied countries leave billions of dollars of aid in doubt.

strikes against Kurdish groups in Syria and northern Iraq in retaliation for the deaths of 12 Turkish soldiers in Iraq over the weekend. The Turkish defense ministry said in a statement Monday that it had killed at least 26 militants in the strikes. In northeast Syria, at least eight civilians were killed in Turkish airstrikes Monday, including two women, Farhad Shami, a spokesman for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, said in a post on X, formerly Twitter. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a United Kingdom-based war monitor, said 12 others were wounded.

Good Housekeeping



HANDOUT
A blue stone circular hardscape complements a round stone firepit.



HANDOUT
A custom designed outdoor kitchen creates an ideal opportunity for outdoor gatherings.

A blue stone circular hardscape complements a round stone firepit.

By CATHY HOBBS
Tribune News Service

Whether you live in a year-round warm weather climate or a place that enjoys all four seasons, there are ways to spruce up your home that may help your family to enjoy their exterior space just as much as their interior one.

Outdoor Kitchens

Outdoor kitchens can be basic or elaborate. Begin by selecting the ideal location for your outdoor kitchen. Select a space that will allow adequate space for both cooking and gathering as well as circulation. When it

Fire pits + hot tubs + outdoor kitchens

comes time to design your outdoor kitchen, you can hire a stone mason or carpenter to build one from scratch or select an outdoor kitchen that is pre-made. There are also companies that will even build a custom all-in-one unit that only has to be hooked up with the help of professionals such as an electrician or plumber.

Fire Pits

Fire pits are more popular than ever and are especially enjoyable on a

chilly night! Fire pits can either be built with the help of a mason or purchased as ready-to-use units. In addition to fire pits, also consider fire bowls. When selecting where to place your fire pit or fire bowl, be sure to select a space that is open and clear to prevent a potential fire hazard.

Hot Tubs

Hot tubs remain a popular outdoor amenity and come in different sizes and shapes. When look-

ing to install a hot tub, evaluate how you want it to blend into your outdoor environment. Consider natural screening such as trees and bushes as well as a partial enclosure. When looking for the ideal location for your hot tub, select a space that will be accessible but also one that blends with your overall outdoor space. One design solution is to create an area that will then be enhanced using landscaping.



HANDOUT
Native landscaping has been planted to create year-round natural screening.



HANDOUT
A hot tub is partially built into the side of hill creating a dynamic outdoor oasis.



HANDOUT
A custom designed outdoor kitchen creates an ideal opportunity for outdoor gatherings.



HANDOUT
An outdoor fire bowl serves as an alternative to a traditional firepit.

Life & Style

Beyoncé's childhood home in Houston burns on Christmas morning

HOUSTON, Texas (AP)—Beyoncé's childhood home caught fire early on Christmas morning, though the family living there escaped safely.

The fire was reported at about 2 a.m. Monday and the Houston Fire Department arrived on the scene of the two-story brick house within three to five minutes, the Houston Chronicle reported.

"We had it contained in about 10 minutes," Houston Fire Department District Chief Justin Barnes told the newspaper.

Beyoncé Knowles' family bought the home on the 2400 block of Rosedale in 1982 and Beyoncé lived there until she was 5 years old. She was seen taking photos of the property when she was in her hometown for her Renaissance World Tour.

The home in the historic Riverside Terrace neighborhood was built in 1946.

A messages sent to Beyon-



A home that singer Beyoncé used to live in as a child stands, July 27, 2022, in Houston.

cé's publicist was not immediately returned late Monday.

The cause of the blaze was under investigation.

Taylor Swift celebrates Christmas Day by watching Travis Kelce and Chiefs play LV

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP)—

Pop superstar Taylor Swift walked into Arrowhead Stadium alongside Santa Claus on Monday to watch her boyfriend and Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce as they played the Las Vegas Raiders in a Christmas Day showdown.

Swift and Kelce have become one of the hottest celebrity couples in the world since they began dating early in the season, and the 12-time Grammy Award-winner has watched

her boyfriend numerous times at Arrowhead Stadium.

This time she showed up in a festive red shirt under a black jacket with St. Nick by her side.

Swift wasn't the only celebrity in Arrowhead Stadium on Monday. Iowa basketball star Caitlin Clark, the reigning AP women's player of the year, was on the sideline for pre-game warmups. She swapped jerseys with Chiefs wide receiver Rashee Rice.

Federal court revives lawsuit vs. Nirvana

LOS ANGELES (AP)—

A federal appeals court on Thursday revived a child sexual exploitation lawsuit filed by the man who appeared naked as a 4-month-old on the cover of Nirvana's 1991

three-judge panel of the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in California reversed that ruling and sent the case back to the lower court.

The appellate panel found that each republication of an image "may constitute a new personal injury" with a new deadline and cited the image's appearance on a 30th anniversary reissue of "Nevermind."

Spencer Elden's lawsuit against the grunge rock group alleges that he has suffered "permanent harm" as the band and others profited from the image of him underwater in a swimming pool, appearing to grab for a dollar bill on a fish hook.

The suit says the image violated federal laws on child sexual abuse material, although no criminal charges were ever sought.

A federal judge in California threw out the lawsuit last year but allowed Elden to file a revised version, which the judge later dismissed on grounds that it was outside the 10-year statute of limitations of one of the laws used as a cause of action.

Thursday's decision by a

"The question whether the 'Nevermind' album cover meets the definition of child pornography is not at issue in this appeal," the court wrote, according to the New York Times.

In an email to The Associated Press, Nirvana attorney Bert Deixler called the ruling a "procedural setback."

"We will defend this meritless case with vigor and expect to prevail," he wrote.

The Associated Press does not typically name people who say they have been victims of sexual abuse unless they come forward publicly, as Elden has.

New York governor commutes sentence of rapper G. Dep who had turned self in for cold case killing

NEW YORK (AP)—Rapper Travell "G. Dep" Coleman, who walked into a New York police precinct in 2010 and admitted to committing a nearly two-decade-old cold case murder to clear his conscience, has been granted clemency by Gov. Kathy Hochul.

Now 49, Coleman has served 13 of a 15-year-to-life sentence. With his sentence being commuted by the Democratic governor, he will now be allowed to seek parole earlier than his original 2025 date.

Coleman is one of 16 individuals granted clemency by Ho-

chul in an announcement made Friday. They include 12 pardons and four commutations. It marked the third time Hochul has granted clemency in 2023.

"Through the clemency process, it is my solemn responsibility as governor to recognize the efforts individuals have made to improve their lives and show that redemption is possible," Hochul said in a written statement.

The rapper earned an associate's degree while in prison and facilitated violence prevention and sobriety counseling programs, while also participating

in a variety of educational and rehabilitative classes, according to Hochul's office. His clemency application was supported by the prosecutor in the case and the judge who sentenced him.

As G. Dep, Coleman had hits with "Special Delivery" and "Let's Get It" and helped popularize a loose-limbed dance called the Harlem shake in the early 2000s. The rapper was one of the rising stars of hip-hop impresario Sean "Diddy" Combs' Bad Boy Records label in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

But his career slumped after his 2001 debut album, "Child of the

Ghetto," and the rapper became mired in drug use and low-level arrests, his lawyer said in 2011.

Attorney Anthony L. Ricco said at the time that Coleman "had been haunted" by the 1993 fatal shooting of John Henkel and decided to confess to shooting someone as a teenager during a robbery in East Harlem. Henkel was shot three times in the chest outside an apartment complex.

His brother, Robert Henkel, had demanded Hochul reject the urgings by prosecutor David Drucker to release Coleman, calling it a "farce." He told the New York Post that "it is one thing to seek (clemency) for drug crimes—but not murder."

Man's repeated absences now have an explanation

DEAR ABBY: My boyfriend of three years works six days a week with Sundays off. For the last six weeks, my calls have gone unanswered from Saturday evening through Monday morning. He'd provide a lame excuse, apologize for the "missed" calls, and the next weekend, the same thing would happen. Long story short, he was spending time in a drug house on the weekends. He ignored my calls because he didn't want me to know what he was doing. He says it's "no big deal," he isn't doing it anymore and we should move forward as if this never happened.

My issue is, I no longer trust him or his judgment because I never imagined he'd do anything like this. Since he has, I no longer feel like I know him. What he did was deceitful and extremely selfish. Now he says I'm throwing away our relationship because "he made a mistake." To me, it isn't a mistake if you repeat the behavior over and over. He CHOSE to do drugs, hide it and ignore me, and he didn't care about anything or anyone but himself.

Now I know, and I am not accepting the behavior. I believe he will do it again, so I'm separating myself from him until he can show me he's no longer doing those things. As for now, we are done. His words are meaningless. I'm not accepting his guilt trip that I'm ending this over nothing. Am I doing the right thing?

TAKING A BREAK IN TEXAS

DEAR TAKING: Yes! A thousand times yes. Knowing he spent six weekends in a drug house makes me wonder if he was also involved in sexual activities. (Please have yourself tested.) Your boyfriend lied and disrespected you. He likes getting high and enjoys the company of people who break the law. You are doing yourself a HUGE favor by getting rid of him. Make it permanent. Bravo for you.

DEAR ABBY: My dear friend "Lana" and her husband both passed away a while back. Recently, my son confided that he and Lana's daughter had an affair years ago that resulted in a child. We all grew up close and regarded ourselves as related even though we were not. Lana's daughter married someone and passed the child off as her husband's. I never noticed how much that young man resembles my son before. I always called him one of my grandsons in an unofficial capacity. He is grown and married now.

Since I learned that he is my biological grandson, I have ached to acknowledge our relationship. But I don't want to rock the boat and disrupt the family dynamic, let alone break my son's trust. Should I take this secret to my grave? After all, he already calls me "Nana."

REAL TRUTH IN THE SOUTHWEST
DEAR REAL TRUTH: Do NOTHING without first talk-

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.



ing about this with your son. Because of the popularity of DNA testing in recent years, your grandson may find out on his own that the man he was raised to believe is his father is not. This kind of revelation can be devastating to some individuals. The news would be better coming from your son than from you.

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Jaquez scores 31, Spoelstra moves to 9-0 on Christmas as Heat top 76ers



MIAMI (AP)—The first thing Miami rookie Jaime Jaquez Jr. did when the schedule was released this summer was check to see when the Heat play in his hometown of Los Angeles.

The second thing was seeing if they played on Christmas.

"I was excited," Jaquez said.

And it showed. Jaquez scored 31 points and got his first double-double, Bam Adebayo finished with 26 points and 15 rebounds and the Heat held on to beat the Philadelphia 76ers 119-113 on Monday night.

"Great to get a win, career night, Christmas," Jaquez said. "I grew up watching these games and to be able to play and have a career night, I just go back to all the hard work, late nights in the gym, preparing for moments like this."

Heat coach Erik Spoelstra improved to 9-0 on Christmas, the best record in NBA history for head coaches on the holiday.

"It's an incredible honor and you don't ever want to take it for granted," Spoelstra said of playing on the holiday. "It really does mean something. You're viewed as a contending team, typically, if you're playing on Christmas."

Reigning MVP and two-time defending scoring champion Joel Embiid missed the game for Philadelphia because of an ankle sprain.

Tobias Harris scored 27 points for the 76ers, and Kelly Oubre Jr. added 25. Mo Bamba scored 18, De'Anthony Melton had 15 and Tyrese Maxey—who shot 4 for 20 from the floor—finished with 12.

"They made him work," 76ers coach Nick Nurse said of Maxey's night. "I do think that he got to some pretty good places and just kind of had one of those nights. ... Just one of those tough nights for him."

Tyler Herro scored 22 points, Duncan Robinson added 16 and Kyle Lowry had 12 for the Heat in what became his first Christmas win. Jaquez also grabbed 10 rebounds for Miami, which held a 56-36 edge on the boards.

The Heat were again without Jimmy Butler (calf strain) and also ruled out Josh Richardson (back discomfort) and Haywood Highsmith (non-COVID illness)—then lost starting forward Caleb Martin in the first half to an ankle sprain.

It was 86-86 after three quarters, the sort of score that suggests it had been close for much of the way to that point.

That was not the case.

Philadelphia started hot, then Miami opened a huge lead—helped by Philly missing 14 straight shots in what became a 21-1 Heat first-half run—and the 76ers then not



Miami Heat guard Jaime Jaquez Jr. (11) is fouled by Philadelphia 76ers guard Tyrese Maxey (0) during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Monday, Dec. 25, 2023, in Miami.

even needing a full quarter to erase what eventually was a 21-point Heat edge in the third.

But Jaquez and Adebayo each had 10 points in the fourth, and the Heat escaped.

Only six rookies in NBA history—Wilt Chamberlain (45), Walt Bellamy (35), LeBron James (34), Bill Cartwright (33), Patrick Ewing (32) and Oscar Robertson (32)—scored more on Christmas than Jaquez did Monday. Even Michael Jordan only managed 30 in his first Christmas game, which came in his third season with Chicago.

"He was tough," Nurse said of Jaquez. "He made a lot of big buckets, when they needed buckets."

KNICKS 129, BUCKS 122

NEW YORK (AP)—Jalen

Brunson scored 38 points and the New York Knicks snapped Milwaukee's seven-game winning streak, ending their lengthy skid against the Bucks with a 129-122 victory Monday.

The Knicks had dropped nine straight meetings, including a 130-111 loss on Saturday in the opener of this two-game series. The Bucks had handled New York easily twice while rolling through their December schedule, but they haven't solved Brunson all season, and the point guard got plenty of help from his teammates this time.

Julius Randle added 24 points and nine rebounds, RJ Barrett bounced back from a poor game Saturday with 21 points and Immanuel Quickley came off the bench for 20.

Anthony Davis scored a game-high 40 points with 13 rebounds, LeBron James had

Giannis Antetokounmpo and Damian Lillard each scored 32 points for the Bucks, who fell to 9-2 this month. Khris Middleton added 24.

CELTICS 126, LAKERS 115

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Krisztaps Porzingis had 28 points and 11 rebounds, Jayson Tatum added 25 points and Boston defeated Los Angeles for the first time in a Christmas Day meeting.

Jaylen Brown had 19 points and Derrick White chipped in with 18 points and 11 rebounds. All five starters had at least 18 points for the Celtics, who have won three straight and 12 of their past 14.

Anthony Davis scored a game-high 40 points with 13 rebounds, LeBron James had

16 points, nine rebounds and eight assists, but the Lakers have dropped six of eight since winning the inaugural In-Season Tournament.

Boston successfully kept Los Angeles at arm's length in the final quarter, despite Davis hitting the 40-point mark for the 40th time in a regular season game.

NUGGETS 120, WARRIORS 114

DENVER (AP)—Jamal Murray scored 28 points, Nikola Jokic overcame an off day from the field by going 18 of 18 from the free throw line and Denver extended its winning streak to five games by holding off Golden State.

Jokic finished with 26 points despite going 4 of 12 from the floor. He also had 14

rebounds and eight assists.

It was a back-and-forth game that featured nine lead changes in the second half.

Andrew Wiggins gave the Warriors a boost by scoring 22 points as he returned to the floor after missing two games with an illness. Stephen Curry took a bit to warm up, not scoring until midway through the second quarter, but heated up late to finish with 18 points.

MAVERICKS 128, SUNS 114

PHOENIX (AP)—Luka Doncic scored 50 points to eclipse 10,000 for his career and had 14 assists, lifting the Dallas Mavericks to a 128-114 win over the Phoenix Suns on Monday night.

Doncic capped a Christmas Day full of NBA games with a stellar performance, hitting 8 of 16 from 3 and all 12 of his free throws. He eclipsed 10,000 career points in the first quarter to reach the milestone in 358 career games, seventh fastest in NBA history.

Dereck Lively II had 20 points and 10 rebounds after missing the previous four games with an ankle sprain and Tim Hardaway Jr. added 18 points in Dallas' ninth straight game without Kyrie Irving (heel).

Chimezie Metu and Grayson Allen gave the Suns a lift off a bench that's been a weak spot at times this season.

Allen scored 19 of his 32 points in the third quarter to help the Suns rally from a 15-point deficit and went 8 of 17 from 3. Metu had 23 points and a career-high 19 rebounds with big man Jusuf Nurkic missing his second straight game due to personal reasons.

Ja Morant back in Memphis, where his return should help the Grizzlies fill seats

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—Two-time All-Star Ja Morant had a chance Thursday night to try to top a "perfect ending."

The Memphis Grizzlies' dazzling point guard played his first game at home since the end of his 25-game suspension to start the NBA season because of his social media antics with guns.

Memphis not only needs Morant on the court, the Grizzlies hope he brings fans back to a venue that felt more like a crypt than an NBA arena without him.

With Morant banned from watching games from the bench with his teammates, empty seats had been easier to find than fans in Memphis. The last team to win a game on its own court this season went into Thursday's game against Indiana as one of two NBA teams with only one home victory.

Morant made quite the splash

in his return to the NBA on Tuesday night, scoring 34 points and the game-winning bucket against New Orleans. Morant called that game "the perfect ending" to a "perfect day."

The Grizzlies' president reminded fans on social media after the team rallied from 24 points down that tickets were available for Thursday night's game. By Thursday morning, only a few remained to watch a team with a 7-19 record overall and just 1-11 in Memphis.

Asked about the atmosphere, Memphis coach Taylor Jenkins quickly replied: "Electric."

"It's going to be awesome," Jenkins said in his pregame availability. "Talking to people around town, everyone has been waiting for this opportunity. I know he's been waiting for this opportunity."

Indiana coach Rick Carlisle said the return of Morant posed challenges that other teams hadn't seen from the Grizzlies this season.

"It's great that Morant is back," Carlisle said. "It's great for the game. It's great for our league. What he did (Tuesday night in New Orleans) was legendary stuff."

It was Morant's first game in Memphis since Game 5 of last season's first-round playoff series against the Los Angeles Lakers on April 26, when Morant and the Grizzlies staved off elimination.

When Morant came out for pregame warmups, the cheers from the crowd began building as soon as he appeared in the tunnel. He jogged to the opposite end of the court, sat down on the visitors' bench and went over some scouting

videos. Then he went through his shooting drills as fans captured video with their phones.

The ovation was even louder in pregame introductions. It reached a crescendo when Morant was announced last as a Memphis starter, the crowd on its feet to welcome back the Grizzlies' leader. By the time the public address announcer said "Ja Morant," he could barely be heard.

Morant provided a reminder of how much better the Grizzlies are with him.

Nonetheless, the franchise that earned the No. 2 seed in the Western Conference each of the past two seasons and won the inaugural play-in games to earn the No. 8 seed in 2021 faces a tall task to earn a fourth straight playoff berth.

The Grizzlies, who hope to get offseason addition Mar-

cus Smart back soon, went into Thursday 13th of 15 teams in the West and 6 1/2 games back of Phoenix for the 10th spot to even earn a play-in opportunity.

Any hopes Morant might've had for postseason awards also are gone. The NBA tweaked some policies for this season to get players to play more games and take fewer nights off to rest. That rule requires players to play in 65 games in most cases to be award-eligible.

Even if Morant plays every game the rest of this season, he will play in 57 games.

Seeing him in Memphis won't be easy the rest of this month. Thursday night's game is followed by a four-game road swing before the Grizzlies cap 2023 by hosting Sacramento on New Year's Eve.

Jackson leads Ravens past the 49ers in a showdown of the top 2 teams



SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP)—Lamar Jackson threw two touchdown passes in a span of 18 seconds in the third quarter and the Baltimore Ravens intercepted Brock Purdy four times in a 33-19 victory over the San Francisco 49ers on Monday night.

Jackson and the Ravens (12-3) turned a highly anticipated matchup between the top two teams in the NFL into a lopsided win with strong performances on both sides of the ball.

Kyle Hamilton and the defense set the tone early by intercepting Purdy on three of the first four drives of the game for the 49ers (11-4) before Jackson started to take over the game.

He scrambled 30 yards to set up a field goal on the final play of the first half to give the Ravens a 16-12 lead and then helped put the game away early in the third quarter.

After Baltimore forced a punt on the opening drive of the second half, Jackson capped a drive by throwing a 6-yard touchdown pass to Nelson Agholor.

Purdy then was intercepted by Patrick Queen on the next play from scrimmage. Jackson immediately turned that into another score with a 9-yard TD pass to Zay Flowers that made it 30-12.

Jackson threw for 252 yards, ran for 45 more and vaulted past Purdy to become the MVP favorite, according to FanDuel Sportsbook. His only real mishap came when he got called for intentional grounding in the end zone after nearly tripping over the umpire, leading to a safety in the first quarter.

Purdy had his roughest game as a pro, becoming the first



AP

Baltimore Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson (8) celebrates with wide receiver Nelson Agholor (15) after connecting on a touchdown pass during the second half of an NFL football game against the San Francisco 49ers in Santa Clara, Calif., Monday, Dec. 25, 2023.

49ers quarterback to throw four interceptions in a game since Colin Kaepernick in 2015, adding a few more near interception and being unable to generate the big plays that made him the league's most efficient quarterback coming into the game.

Purdy finished 18 for 32 for 255 yards before getting replaced by Sam Darnold after getting a stinger in the fourth quarter.

San Francisco's other MVP candidate fared far better with running back Christian McCaffrey running for 102 yards and a TD and adding 28 yards receiving. He set a franchise record with his eighth straight game with at least 100 yards from scrimmage.

This marquee matchup marked the second time ever that the teams with sole possession of the best record in each conference played in Week 16 or later.

Both teams remain on top of their conferences. The Niners are in a three-way tie with Philadelphia and Detroit for the best record in the NFC and can still clinch the No. 1 seed and a first-round bye with wins in their final two games.

The Ravens remained a game ahead of Miami for the best record in the AFC and can clinch the No. 1 seed with a win next week against the Dolphins.

RAIDERS 20, CHIEF 14
KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP)—

Las Vegas got a pair of defensive touchdowns for the second straight week, including a pick-6 of the struggling Patrick Mahomes, and the resurgent Raiders held off the sloppy Kansas City Chiefs 20-14 on Monday to keep their slim postseason hopes alive.

Big defensive tackle Bilal Nichols returned a fumble 8 yards for a touchdown, and Jack Jones took an interception 33 yards for another score 7 seconds later, helping the Raiders (7-8) snap a six-game losing streak to the Chiefs. The Raiders have five defensive TDs this season, their most since 2005.

Kansas City (9-6) squandered an opportunity to clinch

back, Jackson's 5-foot-10, 183-pound frame puts him on the smaller size for NFL safeties, something he's compensated for with his hard-hitting style.

Jackson was granted an audience with Commissioner Roger Goodell last month as he sought advice on how to quit running afoul of the league's unnecessary roughness rules, under which hits that were once celebrated are now scorned.

Jackson said, however, that he only came away from that meeting with more questions because, he said, he was told it's his responsibility to keep his opponents safe.

"The rules, I don't understand," Jackson said. "Obviously, now (I'll) just try to play within them as much as I can. I'll be physical, but at the end of the day they want to see points. I'm unclear how to play the game, protect the offensive guy, protect myself and make plays."

Aidan O'Connell was 9 of 21 for 62 yards, never completing a pass after the first quarter, while White had 145 yards on the ground. Malcolm Koonce had three sacks for the Raiders.

EAGLES 33, GIANTS 25

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—Jalen Hurts scored on the "tush push" that gave him the NFL record for most rushing scores by a quarterback in a season, threw for a touchdown, and Philadelphia (11-4) snapped a three-game losing streak with a win over New York.

Adoree' Jackson gave the Giants (5-10) a spark when he returned an interception 76 yards for a score and Saquon Barkley converted a 2-point conversion that made it 20-18 late in the third quarter.

But the Eagles put it away in the fourth on D'Andre Swift's 5-yard touchdown run and a pair of field goals by Jake Elliott.

New York's Tyrod Taylor connected with Darius Slayton for a 69-yard score late in the fourth that made it 30-25. Taylor was picked off in the end zone on the final play of the game.

Hurts scored his 15th rushing TD of the season on a 1-yard "tush push" early in the first quarter that gave him the most for a QB in a season in NFL history. Carolina's Cam Newton held the record with 14 in 2011.

Hurts threw a 36-yard TD pass to DeVonta Smith for a 17-3 lead that gave him 35 total touchdowns this season, tying the team's season record.

Shoulder injury is latest issue in painful month for Trevor Lawrence and Jags

TAMPA, Fla. (AP)—First, an ankle injury. Next, a concussion. Now, an injured shoulder. The durable Trevor Lawrence keeps getting banged up, and it's costing the Jacksonville Jaguars.

Lawrence, who cleared the NFL's concussion protocol just in time to play Sunday against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, ended up leaving in the fourth quarter with a shoulder injury as the Jaguars lost 30-12.

Lawrence was ineffective before he got hurt, throwing two interceptions and losing a fumble as Jacksonville fell behind 30-0 on the way to its fourth straight loss.

The third-year quarterback, who has never missed a game, said he was hurt diving for a first down on a fourth-play late in the third quarter during Jacksonville's first scoring drive.

"Reached for the first down and got hit out of bounds and just landed on it," Lawrence said. "When I landed, I knew something was off. The next

play, it kind of hurts to throw. I just wanted to finish the drive out. The 2-point (try), you just could tell by the way I threw it that I couldn't really get my shoulder up good enough to really keep playing."

C.J. Beathard replaced Lawrence with 13 1/2 minutes to play and Jacksonville trailing 30-6.

Jaguars coach Doug Pederson said the injury was serious enough that Lawrence couldn't continue playing. Lawrence will be evaluated on Monday.

Lawrence went 17 for 29 for 211 yards. All three of his turnovers led to Tampa Bay touchdowns.

The Jaguars believe Lawrence sustained a head injury while scrambling up the middle on the team's final drive of a 23-7 loss to Baltimore last weekend. He misfired on seven of his final eight passes after the hit, a stretch that raised concerns on the sideline. Lawrence reported symptoms after the game.

Broncos decline to activate Kareem Jackson after his latest suspension, meaning he could be cut

DENVER (AP)—There's a good possibility 14th-year safety Kareem Jackson will get cut on Christmas Day after the Denver Broncos chose not to activate him for their game against New England on Sunday night following his return from his second suspension.

The Broncos' roster exemption on Jackson expires Monday, so they'll either have to make room for him by bidding farewell to another player or release the 14-year veteran.

If that happens, that doesn't necessarily mean it's the end of the road for Jackson in Denver. The Broncos could try to re-sign him to their practice squad and then elevate him for their final two games and any playoff games if they qualify.

But a release would certainly open the possibility

Denver's defensive tone-setter has played his last game in navy and orange, if not in the NFL altogether.

PJ Locke has played exceptionally well in Jackson's absence and he became the first safety in franchise history to sack the quarterback in three consecutive games during Jackson's latest suspension for an illegal high hit on Minnesota's Joshua Dobbs.

"You don't know how the opportunity may come but if you get it, you've got to take advantage of it and he did," Jackson said during an interview at his locker Thursday. "I would be disappointed in PJ if he didn't take advantage of the opportunity."

Jackson, who doesn't play on Denver's special teams, now has missed seven of Denver's

last eight games, and in the one game he did play in that stretch, he ran afoul of the league's unnecessary roughness rules on his very first tackle.

He hit Dobbs too high during a play in which the Vikings QB was lined up as the running back and ran a toss sweep after tight end Luke Hockenson took the snap. Although no flag was thrown, the league suspended him again the next day, and this time, the four-game punishment was upheld on appeal.

Jackson has surrendered \$837,000 in lost paychecks to go with \$89,670 in fines for unsafe hits this season, although he said his \$43,709 fine for an unflagged hit on Chiefs running back Isiah Pacheco in Week 6 was rescinded by the league.

As a converted corner-

MLB is widening the runner's lane to first base

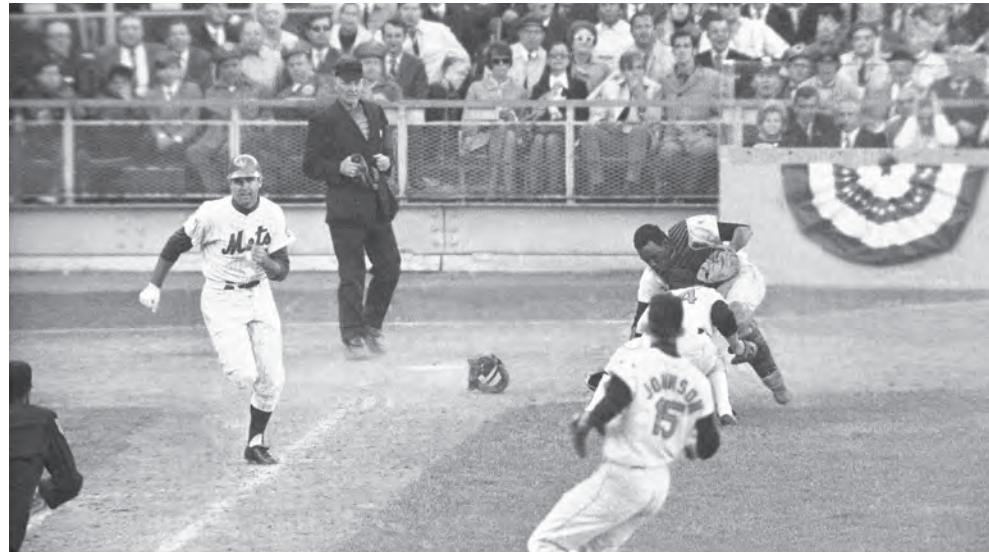
» **Changing rule that has caused World Series controversy**

 **N E W Y O R K**
(AP)—Major League Baseball is widening the runner's lane approaching first base to include a portion of fair territory, changing a more than century-old rule that caused World Series controversy over interference calls.

MLB also is shortening the pitch clock with runners on base by two seconds to 18 and further reducing mound visits in an effort to speed games.

Another change adopted Thursday by the sport's 11-man competition committee requires a pitcher who warms up on the mound before a half inning to face at least one batter.

The new runner's lane overrides a rule that has existed since the National League mandated in 1882 that runners must be within the 3-foot box on the foul side of the base line during the final 45 feet between home and first. Violators were subject to



Orioles catcher Ellie Hendricks and pitcher Pete Richert reach for bunt laid down by J.C. Martin in tenth inning of game 4 of the World Series baseball game Oct. 15, 1969 in New York.

being called out for interfering with fielders taking a throw. The rule was designed to prevent collisions; foul lines intersected the middle of bases until the bags were moved entirely into fair territory in 1887.

"If you're sitting at home or you're even us in the game, it just doesn't make sense," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said of the old rule.

The change widens the lane to include 18-to-24 inches of

fair territory until the edge of the grass, though MLB said it will allow a grace period for compliance because of the need to modify artificial turf surfaces.

The old rule has long sparked frustration because right-handed hitters necessarily begin their sprint to first base in fair territory, and the first base bag is fully in fair ground, too.

Umpires' interpretations of the rule have sparked disputes.

The New York Mets' J.C.

Martin was in fair territory when he was hit on the left wrist by pitcher Pete Richert's throw following his sacrifice bunt in the 10th inning of World Series Game 4 in 1969. That allowed Rod Gaspar to score the winning run from second against Baltimore as plate umpire Shag Crawford and first base umpire Lou DiMuro failed to call interference.

"Since then I've always watched over the years every-

body running down the lane," Richert said Thursday. "I'd say that 30% to 40% of them run inside and it's never called, and changing it now is not going to make any difference in those calls. It'll just justify the no-call. Every once in a while I'll be watching a game and I'll see it and I'll go, 'There they go. They missed another one.'"

The decision went the other way in the seventh inning of World Series Game 6 in 2019, when Washington's Trea Turner was called out for interference by plate umpire Sam Holbrook when he was hit on the back of the right leg by Houston reliever Brad Peacock's throw, a decision upheld in a video review.

"It's just going to make things easier for the ballplayers and the umpires," Holbrook said of the change. "Players can run straight to the bag, especially the right-handed hitters. It's been talked about for a while. I think they're trying to do the right thing."

The out cost Washington a run when Anthony Rendon homered, and Martinez was ejected for arguing after the half inning, needing to be restrained by bench coach Chip Hale.

"I don't know how long that

rule has been in place, probably a hundred years," Martinez said the following day. "These judgment calls are difficult. The umpires do the best they can on getting it right. I know that."

When Turner was called out for interference on a throw to first by Chicago Cubs catcher Willson Contreras following an errant pitch on a third strike on May 19, 2021, Martinez was ejected by umpire Chris Conroy. The manager picked up the first base bag and slammed it to the ground and then kicked it. After another similar call went against Washington on June 14, 2023, Martinez printed out a photo showing where the baserunner was and held it up during his postgame news conference.

A similar play occurred in Game 2 of the 1998 AL Championship Series, when a throw by Yankees first baseman Tino Martinez after Cleveland's Travis Fryman's 12th-inning bunt struck Fryman on the back and rolled on the infield dirt. Second baseman Chuck Knoblauch screamed at plate umpire Ted Hendry for an interference call and pointed toward first rather than chase the ball as Enrique Wilson scored the tiebreaking run from first.

Ohtani gives Porsche to Joe Kelly's wife for his No. 17 with the Dodgers

After the wife of reliever Joe Kelly offered her husband's uniform number to help lure Shohei Ohtani to the Los Angeles Dodgers, the two-way star responded by giving her a Porsche.

The Dodgers shared a video showing Kelly's wife, Ashley, who had launched what she dubbed her #Ohtake17 campaign in hopes that the free agent from Japan would sign

with the team. She showed him all the No. 17 garb her family had that could be repurposed for Ohtani and his family and offered to rename the couple's baby, Kai, to ShoKai. In the video posted this weekend, she opens the front door to reveal a silver sports car parked in front of the house.

"It's yours, from Shohei," a man off camera says in the video to the stunned woman. "He

wanted to gift you a Porsche."

Ohtani received a record \$700 million, 10-year contract this month to make a 30-mile move up Interstate 5 to the Dodgers. He had worn No. 17 with the Los Angeles Angels.

Kelly, who wore No. 17 with the Dodgers from 2019-21 and again last season, is switching to No. 99 after finalizing his own \$8 million, one-year contract.

"I wasn't going to give it up to just anybody," Kelly said after Ohtani was announced as his new teammate. "If Shohei keeps performing, he'll be a future Hall of Famer and I'll be able to have my number retired. That's the closest I'll get to the Hall of Fame."

Asked what Ohtani was giving him in return, Kelly said, "Oh, there's a list, but no comment." (AP)

AGAPE

From page 20

Third place was Agape Youth Team 2 captained by Stephen Chen with a time of 1:27.52.

Agape Youth Team 1 captain Song said that the course was "pretty good. You run to the turning point and back, so you get familiar with where you're running. It's easier to know which runner should be running which leg."

On how they felt with the first-place win even with Team Santa Youth in the lead, they said, "we believe it's a miracle from God. the other team, they're like 16-year-olds, and we're younger than them. They actually took the lead, but when they ran back, they lost the trail, and we somehow came in first."

The team then thanked their school's principal and their driver, and above all, God.

Run Saipan president Ed-



First place Agape Youth Team 1, middle in red; second place Team Santa Youth 2023 left in blue; and Agape Youth Team 2, right pose for a group photo after the awarding of Northern Marianas Athletics' 42nd Christmas Island Relay last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan.

ward Dela Cruz Jr. said of the new course, "the beautiful thing about this course is that it's out-and-back, and everyone got to high-five and cheer everyone down and back."

In this year's event, Dela Cruz said they started the non-competitive family teams first with a 15-minute head start before the competitive teams.

He added that the teams kind

of met in the turnaround point at Kensington Hotel Saipan, "so it was kind of like a Christmas mosh party outside between all the teams." Dela Cruz then said that the new course will most likely be the course again next year if Saipan's roadway construction is not completed.

This year, there were 21 teams in the race for the open, youth, and non-com-

petitive divisions.

The sponsors of this year's race were Coca-Cola Beverage Co. (Micronesia), Inc., TSL Foundation, Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan, McDonald's of Guam & Saipan, IT&E, Northern Marianas Sports Association, Run Saipan, Department of Public Safety, and Marianas High School National Honor Society.

ALLEY

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older ladies, so sometimes we have to play smart against them because they're just faster and younger. But yeah, it was a good tournament."

She said of their win, "It feels good. It always feels good to win."

As for competing with the same team in the next series, she said she's not sure. "We just joined this for fun. Thanks to Joe Villacrusis and Lia Ran-



From left, women's 3x3 champs Alley-Oopsie Daisies' Cassandra Camacho, Antonette Labausa, Irish Pagarao, and Kina Rangamar pose for a photo after the December championship game of the NMIBF Marianas Arsenal 3x3 Basketball Series 2K23 last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

PIRATES

From page 20

lineup and to the top again.

The Pirates had previously just scored one run in the first inning, two in the third, and one in the fourth for a 4-0 lead. The Spartans thought they could catch up after they

scored two runs by the fourth inning, but their pitching staff could not handle the Pirates' offensive heat.

In the end, Pirates' Maratita had four RBIs, two hits out of three at-bats, two runs, and two doubles, while Rudy Guerrero claimed two RBIs, one hit, and one run.



Jaquez scores 31, Spoelstra moves to 9-0 on Christmas as Heat top 76ers.

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Saipan Tribune Sports

MLB is widening the runner's lane to first base.

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SAIPAN TRIBUNE

CHRISTMAS ISLAND RELAY

Agape Youth Team 1 tops youth division



LEIGH GASES

Agape Youth Team 1 runs to the finish line at the Hyatt Regency Saipan during the Northern Marianas Athletics' 42nd Christmas Island Relay last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan.

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Agape Youth Team 1 topped the under 18 division of the new Northern Marianas Athletics' 42nd Christmas Island Relay 13.1-mile course from Hyatt Regency Saipan to Marpi and back last Saturday.

Agape student-athletes started the Christmas weekend off on the right foot and swept the competition in the youth and open division. In the youth division, they outran three other teams with a time of 1:21.41.

The team was captained by Daniel Song with team members John Chen, Jeshurun He, Daniel Yang, and

Rayviel Escarlan.

A close second place went to Team Santa Youth 2023 captained by Andrei Kaithlyn Chavez with a time of 1:22.54. They were initially in the lead but got lost toward the end of the course which allowed Agape Youth Team 1 to overtake them for first place.

See AGAPE on Page 19

of Lumabi who took every opportunity at the basket.

Tied at 15-15 in the last minutes of the winner-take-all finals, Pagaro broke the tie and put them up by a point. It was Swish Kebab's possession and Lumabi threw Hail Mary's from outside and under the basket, but to no avail. Pagaro then got a hold of the ball and wasted time until the buzzer sounded to steal the win away.

Labausa said after the championships that the tournament was "fun." She said, "I like how the younger girls are playing together and learning how to play with each other because they're the future right? I think they've grown in their game. They're a lot faster than us

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By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER


Alley-Oopsie Daisies claimed the women's title in the December championship of the NMIBF Marianas Arsenal 3x3 Basketball Series 2K23 last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Irish Pagaro, Cassandra Camacho, Kina Rangamar, and Antonette Labausa just managed to slip past Swish Kebabs' Marlene Lumabi, Angellyn Roligat, Silvina Simram, and Kaithlyn Chavez, 16-15.

Third place went to Trail Glaziers' Jan-Nasia Travilla,



LEIGH GASES

Alley-Oopsie Daisies' Irish Pagaro drives to the basket while defended by Swish Kebabs players during their championship game of the NMIBF Marianas Arsenal 3x3 Basketball Series 2K23 last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Kaia Travilla, Mikki Kautz, and Madeleine Alegre who won over Dunkin' Donuts' Lency Sagarino, Yasmeen Younis, Venice Enriquez, and

Destiny Pangelinan, 18-11.

Both teams were deadlocked toward the end of the game as Alley-Oopsie Daisy blew their early lead because

Pirates lay waste to Spartans, 16-3

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The undefeated Pirates are still the league-leading team with five wins after they defeated the Spartans, 16-3, in the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Master's League last Wednesday at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

It was a run mercy-ruled game as the floodgates opened for the Pirates in the fifth inning. The Spartans' pitching staff could not

put a leash on the Pirates' offense as they scored 12 consecutive runs in that inning alone.

It started with a base on balls to Pete Sablan, who was then brought in by Pete Tomokane. Audie Maratita then hit an RBI-double, who in turn came home on another RBI double by Eric Palacios.

From there, back-to-back-to-back RBI singles were made all the way from the bottom of the

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LEIGH GASES

Pirates' Mark Toves is in the batters' box during their 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League game against the Spartans last Wednesday at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.